
THE
Texts of the Sermons
IN THIS
SECOND VOLUME.

SERMON XX.

ST. Matthew the Fifth, Verse 19.
*Whoſoever therefore ſhall break
one of theſe leaſt Commandments, and
ſhall teach Men ſo, he ſhall be called the
leaſt in the Kingdom of Heaven; but
whoſoever ſhall do and teach them, ſhall
be called great in the Kingdom.* p. 1.

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ſaid by them of old time, thou ſhalt not*

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kill; and whosoever shall kill, shall be in danger of the judgment.

But I say unto you, that whosoever is angry with his Brother without a cause, shall be in danger of the judgment; and whosoever shall say to his Brother, Raca, shall be in danger of the Council; but whosoever shall say, thou Fool, shall be in danger of Hell fire.

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SERMON XX.

ON THE

Fifth of St. Matthew.

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St. Matth. Ch. v. Ver. 19.

Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least Commandments, and shall teach Men so, he shall be called the least in the Kingdom of Heaven ; but whosoever shall do and teach them, shall be called great in the Kingdom of Heaven.

THere is nothing more agreeable to Christianity, than Liberty ; and yet there is nothing more contrary to it. If by Liberty be meant a freedom from all sinful Courses, from the Power of Corruption, from the Bondage of the Devil ; and after all, from those tedious external Washings, Purifications, Sacrifices, and distinctions of Meats, and Drinks, &c. so usual, so famous, so strictly required of the Jews under the Mosaick Law, to this Liberty Christianity is a Friend, a Patron, and Defender ; and this is of the very Essence of our Religion. But if by Liberty be understood Licentiousness ; and that which should be a modest Virgin, is drawn and represented

presented in the looser Habit of a Strumpet; and Men fancy they are, and cannot be free, except they have Elbow-room in Sin, and may gratify their Senses, and carnal Desires as they please: If this be the Notion of Liberty, Christianity is a professed Enemy to it, and declares an Eternal War against it. It is a very wilful and notorious mistake, to think Christ came to free us from Obedience; or that he descended from Heaven, to loose us from the Bonds of our Duty; so far from it, that he came to require it upon greater Motives; and enjoined it with greater Sanctions; pressed Observance not only of the greater, but lesser Commands; and in case of failure, declared that we shall find we have a God to deal with, who will not be mocked; for so it is in the Text, *Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least Commandments, and shall teach Men so, he shall be called the least, &c.*

To give you the Sense of these Words.

1. By the Commandments here Spoken of, are meant the Commands and Precepts delivered and laid down by Christ in this Sermon on the Mount, both those that go before the Text, and those that follow after it; and therefore it is emphatically said, *these Commandments*, i. e. *These* I am now delivering to you, and which lie so much out of the common road of Practice, that few believe they are concerned in them.

2. They are called little Commandments, and the *least*, not that any Command of God in Scripture is so in it self, or in the Nature

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of a Trifle ; but because they were so in the Opinion of the Scribes and Pharisees, and the People of that Age ; who either called the Commandements of the Ceremonial Law, *the greatest* ; and those of the Moral, *the least* ; or if they allowed the Title of great Commands to any part of the Moral Law, it was to such Commands as forbid the more scandalous, and barbarous Sins, i. e. *Thou shalt do no Murder.* This they called a great Commandement ; but *thou shalt not be angry with thy Brother without Cause*, nor revile him, nor abuse him, nor give him ill Names, and opprobrious Language, &c. These they called little, and the *least* Commands ; Counsels rather than Commands ; the Omission of which they thought would be no way prejudicial to the Eternal Welfare of their Souls.

3. To break these little or least Commandements, and to teach Men so, was the Sin of the Pharisees ; who not only neglected these Commands of God themselves, but taught others too, not to discompose themselves about the neglect of them, as long as they keep close to the bigger Commands, such as Sacrificing, Circumcision, frequenting the Passover, putting on their Phylacteries, &c. or such as enjoined forbearance of the Overt Acts of some notorious Sins, Adultery, Fornication, Perjury, Stealing, &c. And to break these Commandements is to slight them, to disregard them, to act contrary to them, and wilfully to do what they forbid, or wilfully to omit what they do enjoin.

4. To

4. To be called, or to be the least in the Kingdom of Heaven ; though this Phrase, *Matth. xi. 11.* is used to describe a Person that is an Infant, a Babe, a Novice, a young beginner in Christ's Religion, who is sensible, and knows indeed, that Christ's Kingdom is a spiritual Kingdom, but knows it in a very low degree ; and is therefore said to be greater in some respect, than St. *John* the Baptist, who from the vulgar Error of his Country, seem'd to cherish some Relicks of that Opinion, that the Messiah was to appear with External Pomp and marks of Authority. But though this be the meaning of that Phrase there, yet what is a Comparison in that Place, is a Threatning here ; and therefore requires another Sense : And it being spoken with Allusion to breaking these least Commandements, and by way of Retaliation, that as they sinn'd in that which was the least, so they should be rewarded with being the least in the last Day ; it must necessarily be as much, as *being excluded from the Kingdom of Heaven* : Whether by the Kingdom of Heaven we understand the Kingdom of Grace, or the Kingdom of Glory. And though the Church be sometimes called *the Kingdom of Heaven*, as *Matth. xiii.* Yet even in this Sense the Threatning will appear to be dismal enough ; for the meaning will be, that such a one as breaks these least Commandements, will be, can be no true, no living Member of the Church of Christ ; and if so, he can be no Heir of the Kingdom of Glory. And hence it is, that St. *Chrysostom* renders the word *least*, by *no body*,
or

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or nothing, i. e. *He shall be nothing in the Kingdom of Heaven*; and will be a very despicable, contemptible Creature, when Christ shall come in Glory.

5. And from hence it will be easie to guess, what must be the import of the Promise that's added here: *But whosoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the Kingdom of Heaven. i. e.* He that shall make Conscience of these least Commandements, and (though the World count them little and inconsiderable, and looks upon them as things of no moment,) shall have and bear an equal respect to these, the same he doth to those Commands which are acknowledged to be greatest; and shall teach Men to do so, not only in his Discourses and Colloquies, but in his Practice and Example, he shall be *truly great*, greater than this World can make him; greater than the greatest here on Earth; even great, and high, and honourable in the Kingdom of Heaven.

Having thus acquainted you with the Sense, I must do what I can to enforce this great and weighty Truth; and this I cannot do better, than by making the following Addresses to your Souls.

I. This Text overthrows and breaks the neck of that loose Principle, that in order to Salvation, it is sufficient to avoid only gross, notorious, scandalous Sins. How can it be sufficient, when Christ protests here, *Whosoever shall break one of these least Commandements, and shall teach Men so, shall be called the least in the Kingdom of Heaven.*

It's

It's a marvellous thing to see what Schemes of Divinity Men erect to themselves, that they may with greater Security, and Satisfaction, wallow in the Mire; and please the World and the Flesh. I know not whether the Popish distinction of Sins into Mortal and Venial, hath contributed to this Error; but sure I am, that in abundance of things, which are not very agreeable to the Rule of the Gospel, which yet Custom and Education, and the humour of the Age, hath made either necessary or convenient, the Expedient Men find out is this, that they are trivial, little, inconsiderable Faults, whereby the dreadfulness of them soon disappears; and this done, they practise and commit them without Terror, or Regret, or Concernment; and their Consciences do not at all boggle at them; especially while the fair Weather of their Health, and Pleasure, and Ease, and Strength, and Liberty, and Plenty, lasts: And of this Nature are most of the things Christ takes notice of, in the Discourse succeeding the Text; and whereof we shall have occasion to treat more largely in the sequel: Such as secret Envy, Hatred, Grudges, Malice in our Heart against our Neighbour; abusive Language, calling him by ill Names, mincing of Oaths, needless Asseverations, lascivious Thoughts, Desires, Words, Expressions, Passions, Affections, Touches, Kisses, Looks, Glances, keeping ill Company, and complying with their Follies; neglect of several Acts of Charity, and Self-denials; sinister Ends and Intentions in Religious Actions, mistrust of God's Providence,

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vidence, Discontentedness, loving the World better than God, &c,

That these are Sins is evident, because they are forbid ; yet you cannot but know how they are overlook'd as inconsiderable Failings ; nor do the generality think they lose their Reputation, and Character of good Men, by not watching against them, or by suffering them to go and come as there is occasion. While they commit no Sins that send them to Goals, and Prisons, or bring them to the Gallows ; or while they keep free from Sins which the Heretors and Debochees of the Age do wallow in, they take themselves to be tolerable Saints ; and look upon the other Deformities of their Souls, as things of no moment ; and while they are guilty of no Crimes that make them Infamous, and can charge themselves with nothing that's very bloody, they have no melancholy Thoughts about the Garment spotted by the Flesh ; and may be, make matter of Sport and Laughter of that which hath cost considerate Men many Tears, and mournful Accents.

There is no doubt, but there are greater and lesser Sins, and some have greater Malice in them, and are attended with greater Brutishness and Stupidity ; with higher degrees of Boldness and Insolence, and are more immediately level'd against the Nature of God than others : But though in this respect some are greater, some lesser, yet if we consider the tremendous God, who is offended by that which we call a little Sin, it will appear in other

other Colours ; for either it is forbid, or it is not ; if it be not forbid, it must be either lawful, or indifferent ; if it be forbid, it is forbid as much as Adultery or Blasphemy. And can any Sin be little, that is an Affront to a Great and Infinite Majesty ? Can that be little, which is injurious to God's Power, makes War with his Mercy and Goodness, abuses his Patience, diminishes his Glory, and wrongs his Perfection and Holiness ? Can that be little, which disfigures the noblest Workmanship of God, our immortal Souls ; fills them as it were with Scabs, and sullies their Beauty and Splendor ? Can that be little, which manifestly hinders our progress in a spiritual Life, stops the Stream and Current of the Divine Grace and Influence, and disposes to Damnation.

Could we play the Fool, as they do in the Church of Rome, and tell you, that these lesser Sins may be purged away by a little Holy Water ; by the Bishop's Blessing, by smiting the Breast, and the bare saying of a *Pater noster*, by a general Confession, &c. You might think then, there is no great matter in them ; but if they require a serious Repentance and Reformation as well as other Sins, who can make light of them ? Were there nothing in them, but that they dispose the Soul to greater Sins, and to a loose, careless sort of Religion, this would be a discouragement enough ; for all the World knows, that no Man grows perfectly wicked on a sudden, but by degrees they go on to more daring Impieties : *Know ye not that a little Leaven, leavens the whole lump ? Saith the*

the Apostle, 1 Cor. v. 6. And Behold how great a matter a little Fire kindles, saith St. James, Chap. III. 5. And doth not Experience tell us, (to use the Words of a certain Divine) how an unchast Thought assented to, soon welcomes Delight; Delight, Consent; Consent, Action; Action, Custom; Custom, Habit; Habit, Perseverance; Perseverance, an obduracy of Heart; which, (without God's miraculous Providence interposes) leads to final Impenitence.

A Man may avoid scandalous, great and clamorous Sins, such as Murther; Adultery, Cursing, Blasphemy, Theft, Extortion, Prophaness, &c. and yet all this while have not one grain of true Love to God; for all this he may do meerly out of regard to his Ease, and temporal Interest; and if you consider what St. Paul protests, that if any Man love not the Lord Jesus, let him be Anathema, Maranatha; Cursed, and for ever Cursed, 1 Cor. xvi. 22. What satisfaction can that Man enjoy within, that notwithstanding his shunning some scandalous Sins, hath not any tolerable assurance, that he loves God, and the Lord Jesus Christ? If you love him, you must keep his Commandments; and if Love obliges you to keep one, why not another? Do not they all come from the same Law-giver? Are not they all deliver'd with the same Seriousness, and by the same Authority? Who makes them to differ? Who told you, you may observe one, and not another? Where are the distinguishing Marks, to discern, which is to be practis'd; and which is not? Doth not the same Spirit

run through all? In a word, if you love God to any purpose, you will not only dread crying Sins, but even those which looser Men make no great matter of; and its certain, that Soul is not yet truly converted, that doth not seriously watch against evil Thoughts, Desires, Passions, Affections, &c. (for these are usually counted lesser Sins,) as well as against greater Abominations. And therefore,

You may easily perceive, that we are not to break a Command of our dear Lord and Master, because it seems little, or because the World esteems it so. What hath the World to do with my Religion? Doth God govern himself by the Verdict of the World, and sensual Men? What if Men, who have no right Apprehensions of God, make nothing of corrupt Communications, must I be guided by their Example? Can any Commandment, that proceeds out of the Mouth of God, be termed little? Might not we as well say, that God spoke in jest? If God commands me to follow Righteousness, Faith, Charity, and Peace, with all them that call on him out of a pure Heart, and to flee youthful Lusts, shall I neglect this Command, because the World makes a pish of it? Hath the Great God of Heaven and Earth thought fit to send his Son into the World to tell me, that private Revenge is unlawful; and conforming to the World in their Vanities, and Fooleries, and Revellings, and Extravagancies, is displeasing to him; and my covetous Thoughts and Desires are offensive to his Holiness, and have not I all the rea-

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son in the World to stand in awe of his Command, though a thousand wicked Men say, it's either needless, or impracticable? How can a Divine Command be little, that concerns Mens Immortal Souls? Is there any thing greater in this World, than the good and welfare of their precious Souls? Doth God tell me such a Sin (though it seems never so small in the eyes of the World) will help to kill my Soul, and is Ingratitude to him, in whom I live, and move, and have my Being; and shall I venture upon it? God forbid. *Yea, let God be True, but every Man a Lyar; as it is written, that thou mightest be justified in thy saying, and be clear when thou judgest, Rom. iii. 4.*

II. Let none of you wonder at Christ's peremptory Determination here, *Whosoever shall break one of these least Commandments, and shall teach Men so, he shall be called the least in the Kingdom of Heaven.* You'll say, What! break but one of these Commandments, and one of the least, and be damn'd! Where then is the Grace of the Gospel! What becomes then of the vast Treasures of Mercy, which came in with Jesus Christ? At this rate our Yoak is heavier than that of the Jews. Marvel not my Brethren, the greater the Grace is, the greater will be the Account; the greater the Mercy, the greater will be the Reckoning. And yet this ought to be no discouragement to any of us; for the meaning is, not that every surprize, or accidental Failing, or breaking one of these Commands against our Will, or

before we are aware, or after we have used all possible Watchfulness, excludes from the Kingdom of Heaven; for then no Flesh could be saved. But he that wilfully breaks one, and makes a Trade of it, knows, or hears God's Will in that particular, and yet will not be persuaded to do it; and teaches others too, either by his Discourse or Example; neglects such a Command, and feels no Remorse, *knows the Judgment of God, that they which commit such things, are worthy of Death; and not only doth the same, but hath pleasure in them that do them; as it is said, Rom. i. 32. That's the Man, who shall be called least in the Kingdom of Heaven.* And do not you think there is a great deal of Justice in all this? What! For a Man first to disregard an express Command of Christ, and then, that he may not think himself obliged to it, to call it little, and inconsiderable, and so to neglect it, and after all, prompt others to do so too; Is not this a manifest contempt of God's Sovereignty, and Mercy, and Love, and Charity, in Christ Jesus? Doth not this look like Enmity against God? Is not this a sign of a secret Hatred and Indignation against the ways of God? Is not this an Argument of Obstinacy and Stubbornness? Doth not this infer want of Sense, and want of Fear? And would you have God save a Man that doth not fear him? Would you have him receive Men into the Kingdom of Heaven, that do not only not think it worth while to obey him in so small a matter, (small in their own account, and therefore surely the easier) but encourage others

others to do the like? Doth not this argue a delight in a sinful sensual Life? And what! Do you think God will let a Man or Woman in at the Gates of Glory, that looks upon the Prophet as mad, because he bid him do so small a thing, *Wash in the River Jordan seven times, that he may be clean?*

God measures our Actions by our Hearts; and if the Heart be averse from him, or from the ways of Righteousness, Is such a Person fit to sing with Angels, to triumph with Martyrs, and to sit and rejoice with Souls, that loved God with all their Hearts, and with all their Minds?

Ay, but to break one of these least Commandments, and to teach another to do so, What great matter is there in that? My Friends, He that breaks one, will break another, and is in a Disposition to offend against more: He will never stop there, one Sin engages him into the Practice of another; and if he propagates the Evil too, and like a rotten Sheep, infects others, doth not that one Folly discover a Heart, that hath no Desire, no Inclination to take Christ's Yoke upon him; and loth, unwilling, backward to entertain Christ upon his own Terms; and is this following him in the Regeneration? And he that doth not follow him in the Regeneration, How shall he be able to sit with him in his Throne? And this puts me in mind of another Observation.

III. That he that lives ill, teaches another to live ill too. He that shall break one of these

least Commandments, *and teach Men so, &c.* In order to be excluded from the Kingdom of Heaven, it is not necessary a Man should get into a Pulpit, and there proclaim that it is lawful to lie, to cheat, to defraud, to sing filthy Songs, to break obscene Jest, to hate our Neighbour, or to return Evil for Evil; this needs not: Thy Actions, Christian! spread the Poison, and teach the next Man thou meetest withal, to do as thou doest; for in breaking such a known Command of the Gospel, and being unconcerned, What can thy fellow Christian think, but that thou approvest of it? And, supposing thou approvest of it, if the Grace of God restrains him not, he soon begins to think, that what is lawful for thee, may be lawful for him; and thus he learns of thee, though thou doest not open thy Lips to him. There are few Men so bold, as in their Words, and Speeches, to defend and justify things directly contrary to the Will of God in the Gospel; but you do mischief enough to the Souls of Men, by your evil Practices. The Mutes, among the Turks, teach by their Gestures; much more may Men be taught by Actions; especially where there is already a Disposition to embrace that which is Evil. Physicians and Naturalists talk of transplanting Diseases from Men into Beasts; nay, some go so far, as to prescribe ways to transfer Distempers from Men into Herbs and Plants. Whether it be so, I enquire not; but sure I am, that the Diseases of the Soul are, and may be transplanted and conveyed from one Man to another, even
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by evil Practices; and this is teaching and making Profelytes to Hell, and to the Kingdom of Darkneſs, the readieſt way to be excluded from the Kingdom of Heaven; which will give me occaſion,

IV. To repreſent to you, what it is to be the leaſt, or to be excluded from the Kingdom of Heaven. Fancy you ſaw a poor miſerable Man ſtarving with hunger, and ſo placed, that directly over againſt him he could ſee the richeſt Banquet, the moſt delicate Diſhes, huge plenty of Victuals of all ſorts, the Company eating their fill, and ſatiating themſelves with all the Variety that Earth, and Sea, and Air can yield; and the poor Wretch that is over againſt this Company, but a few paces removed from them, unable to get the leaſt Morſel of Bread, ready to tear his own Fleſh from off his Shoulders; and yet in an utter impoſſibility to get ſo much as the Crums that fall from thoſe Rich Mens Tables. Do not you think this would be as great a Torment as can well be imagined? Why, this is the Emblem of being the leaſt, or excluded from the Kingdom of Heaven.

The Soul, that is ſo unhappy as to miſs of it, will ſee *Abraham* afar off, and *Lazarus* in his Boſom; be ready to periſh, ready to burſt; ſee all the Glory and Joy of bleſſed Creatures before his Eyes, the Delicacies, the Dainties, the Pleaſures, the Fetiivals, the rich Entertainments they enjoy and ſwim in, paſſing before him, and yet not able to touch, not able to

reach the least Extremity of all, though his Soul be big with ten thousand desires after them. What a Torment, what a Plague, what a Vexation must this be? What Grief, what Sorrow, what Anguish must this cause? And if this must continue to Eternal Ages, what Tongue is able to express the Torment?

And can you after all this, call any of the Commandments of the Gospel little ones, and break them, and pass by them as if they did not belong to you; and tempt others to do so too, when this is the high way to be excluded from the Kingdom of Heaven? But

V. Are there no Ambitious Men here? Are there none among you that desire to be Great? Have none of you a mind to be prefer'd and exalted to eminent Places? You must be either very mortified, or very dull, if Greatness can make no Impression upon you. Preferment! What is there that is more hunted after? How do many break their Sleep, and fall into Discontent, and Vexation, because they cannot be advanced? What waiting at Court? What cringing, what bowing to Great Men? What running to this Friend, and to th' other Friend? what Flattery, what Dissembling, what Compliances are used, and all to be Great?

Behold! We can tell you a way to be Great; greater than *Cesar*, or *Pompey*, or *Alexander*; greater than all the Kings or Rulers of the Earth. Great! Where? Not at Court, not in the Camp, or Army: Not in Church-Dignities or Preferments; but great in the Kingdom

dom of Heaven. And is not the Kingdom of Heaven a more lofty, and more spacious Empire than the whole Roman Monarchy, in all its greatest Extent and Glory? It's true, we cannot shew you this Kingdom, we cannot make it visible to your Eyes; but we can tell you that St. *Paul* saw it, and Christ did enter into it; and he that hath power to dispose of all the Glories of it, hath sent us to tell you, That you may be great, and he'll make you so; great as Angels, great as the Worthies of God; greater than Kings, greater than all the Princes of the Earth; greater than all the proud things which make so great a noise in the World now; and all this, if you will close with his Desires; and both do, and teach the Commandments Christ recommends to in his famous Sermon.

Little they may seem, and contemptible they may appear in the Eyes of the Men that have their portion in this Life. But as little as they may seem to be, your Conscientious and Impartial Respect to them all, to the least as well as to the greatest, shall exalt you; exalt you far above all the Glory and Splendor of this World; raise you from the Dunghil, take you out of the Dust, and set you with Princes, even with the Princes of God's People. If you are great already, this shall make you greater.

Lay up therefore these Commandments in your Hearts, and in your Souls; bind them for a Sign upon your Hands; let them be as Frontlets between your Eyes; teach them your Children;

dren; speak of them when you sit in your Houses, and when you walk by the way; when you lie down, and when you rise up: Assure all those you converse with, that these Commandments are Life, and Peace, and Rational, and Equitable, and Just, and Necessary, and Health to the Soul; Foretastes of Happiness, and Prefaces to an endless Glory. Thus do, and thus teach; Teach by your Discourses; teach by your Actions; teach by your Example: So *Noah* taught the unbelieving World, by building an Ark, to the saving of his House, to save themselves from the Wrath to come: So do you, and build upon the Word of the Son of God, That you shall be great in the Kingdom of Heaven.

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SERMON XXI.

St. Matth. Ch. v. Ver. 20.

For I say unto you, That except your Righteousness shall exceed the Righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the Kingdom of Heaven.

A Preface, or Introduction, will be needless. It's enough, that these Words are part of *Christ's* Famous Sermon on the Mount: The Method I shall observe in handling them, shall be this following; to Enquire, and Consider,

I. Who *These Scribes and Pharisees* were.

II. What their *Righteousness* was, and wherein it consisted.

III. How, and in what our *Righteousness* is to exceed their *Righteousness*.

IV. The Danger, if we do not, ye shall in no case enter into the Kingdom of Heaven.

I. Who these *Scribes and Pharisees* were.

i. The *Pharisees*. You have often heard of Three famous Sects among the Jews when Christ

Christ appeared in the World, the *Pharisees*, the *Essenes*, and the *Sadducees*.

The *Pharisees* were an Order of Men, who distinguished themselves from the Vulgar, by certain Austerities and Mortifications, and a seemingly preciser way of Living; yet they convers'd, and lived in Cities and Towns, and were so far from avoiding, that they seem'd to affect Places where there was a great Concourse of People.

When they began, or, who was the first Founder of them, is uncertain; but it's probable, the Institution of the *Nazarites* of old, *Numb. vi. 2.* and the Order of the *Rechabites* afterward, *Jerem. xxxv. 2.* or the strictness of the *Hasideans*, might give occasion to this peculiar way of living, though the Votaries, in progress of time, deviated and degenerated from those sober Patterns; and, as it was with *Monkery* in the Christian Church, improved, or, rather abused, the preceding, pious, and well-meant Self-denials, into Superstition.

The *Essenes* were a kind of Hermits, who chose to dwell in the Country, as far from Crouds as they could; and, though they had Procurators in Cities, and populous Places, to receive and entertain those of their Sect, whose Occasions led them to pass that way, yet their chief abode was in a Wilderness, not far from *Jericho*; from whence, as they grew in number, they dispers'd themselves, and planted Colonies in other Places. These were a modest and soberer sort of People, and studied self-denial too, but to better and greater Purpo-

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Purposes than the *Pharisees*; and therefore possibly it is, that *Christ* passes no censure upon them, because their Service for the most part was reasonable, and in their Morals, they came very near the Christian Institution; and it's likely, that most of them turned Christians afterward, being so well qualified, and *εὐλαβήτοις*, prepared for that excellent Discipline; and this might give occasion to *Eusebius*, and others, to think, *Euseb.* that the *Essenes*, *Philo* speaks of, *Hist.* 1. 2. were Christian *Asceticks*. C. 16. 17.

The *Sadducees* were Sensualists, and *Epicureans*, and denied the Being of another World; pretended indeed to keep close to the Letter of the Law of *Moses*, rejected Traditions, and derided the *Pharisees*, who were great Admirers of it; but were Men loose, and profane, debauched and cruel, a Temper agreeable enough to their Principle; which was, That Men die like Beasts, and that there is no Resurrection of the Dead; though it must be confess'd, that these Impious Tenets took not much with the Common People, the Persons who espoused these Doctrines, being chiefly Men of great Estates, and Dignities, who are apt, without very great Circumspection, from an over-admiration of Things Present and Visible, to be drawn into contempt of Things Invisible and Eternal.

To return to the *Pharisees*, the Men the Text speaks of; This Order was subdivided into Seven Sects, who all obliged themselves

to

to several sorts of Austerities, too tedious to be told here; and so taking it seems, were these External Rigors, that there were *Women Pharisees*, as well as *Men Pharisees*.

The Name *Pharisee*, is as much as a *Separatist*, for so the *Pharisees* were, separating themselves from the rest of Mankind, by an affected Piety, which passed for great strictness in that Age, and gave occasion to the Apostle, to say, That before his Conversion, he lived after the strictest way of the Jewish Religion, a *Pharisee*, *Act. xxvi. 5.*

2. The *Scribes*; These were *Vide Lightf. in* in the Nature of Secretaries, *Matth. ii. 4.* or Clerks, or Publick Notaries to the *Sanhedrin*, or Great Council of the Jews; which Council in those Days, consisting of *Sadducees* and *Pharisees*; these Two Factions had their distinct Secretaries, or Notaries, as appears from *Act. xxlii. 9.* The *Scribes*, or Advocates, who were of the *Pharisees* side, having entirely addicted themselves to their Cause and Service, were of the same Opinion with the *Pharisees* in all things; stiffly maintaining their Doctrines, Principles, and Traditions, and being commonly Men of Learning, were in equal esteem with the *Pharisees*; the rather, because what the *Pharisees* boldly and proudly asserted, the *Scribes* endeavoured to prove from Records, and Monuments of Antiquity, and such Writings, as they judged proper for their purpose: I know some think, they were the Elders of the *Sanhedrin*, and the Chief Expositors of the Law; but if

we compare the Account the Scripture gives of them, with what the *Talmudists* say of them, they seem to have been such Men, as I have described them; nor did their Office, and Learning debar them from being Interpreters of the Law, but qualify them rather for that Employment. In a word, What the *Canonists* are, and have been of late Years to the Pope, the same were the Scribes to the Pharisees, defending their pretended Rights and Priviledges, and Authority and Traditions, with all the Zeal, and Passion, as is common to Men, who designedly espouse an Interest or Faction; and indeed, one Egg is not liker another, than *Pharisaism*, and *Popeism* are, as were an easie Matter to prove in several Instances, but that I have more material Things to tell you. Let us go on therefore, and

H. Consider, *What their Righteousness was, and wherein it consisted.*

And to understand the Mystery of it, I shall in the first place, represent to you the Particulars of their Righteousness, as they are Recorded by the Evangelists; and then shew, wherein it was defective, that we may be the better able to distinguish, and see, how our Righteousness is to exceed theirs.

1. The Particulars of their Righteousness; and they were these following. They gave Alms, Matth. vi. 2. They pray'd, Matth. vi. 5. and pray'd very long, Matth. xxiii. 14. They fasted, and when they fasted, disfigured their Faces, and

and looked ruefully, *Matth.* vi. 16. They fast-
 ed two days in a Week, *Luc.* xviii. 12. They
 praised God, and gave him thanks for his Mercies,
Luc. xviii. 12. They were no scandalous Offen-
 ders, *Extortioners, Unjust, Adulterers*, *Luc.* xviii.
 11. They were very ready to resolve Cases
 of Conscience, *Matth.* xxiii. 16. They taught
 the Doctrine, and maintained the Law of Mo-
 ses, *Matth.* xxiii. 2, 3. They Garnish'd, Adorn-
 ed, and Beautified the Sepulchres of the Pro-
 phets of old, *Matth.* xxiii. 29. They had a
 great Veneration for the Traditions of their
 Church, *Marc.* vii. 2, 3, 4. They were very
 punctual in paying Tithes, or the tenth part
 of the Fruits of the Earth, that fell to their
 share, *Matth.* xxiii. 23. They carried their
 Phylacteries about with them, where-ever
 they went, which were certain pieces of Parch-
 ment, wherein were written some Sentences,
 or Sections of the Law, particularly of *Exod.*
 xii. and xiii. and *Deut.* vi. and xi. and these
 they tied to their Wrists and Foreheads, and
 made them very broad, *Matth.* xxiii. 5. They
 were often Purifying and Washing themselves,
 not only their Hands and Wrists, ἀχειρὶν
 ἡγνῶντες, as *Theophylact* speaks, up to the Elbow,
 but their whole Bodies too, especially, when
 they came from the Market-place, being fear-
 ful, lest some filthiness, contracted by con-
 verse, should stick to them, *Mark.* vii. 3. They
 took great pains to make Profelytes, and Con-
 verts to their Religion, for they compassed
 Sea and Land to do it, *Matth.* xxiii. 15. They
 were so strict, or so nice rather, that they
 were

were afraid of touching a Person, who was counted an open and scandalous Sinner; would not only not Eat with him, but not so much as touch him, which was the reason why the *Pharisee*, in whose House *Christ* dined, found fault with our Saviour, for suffering himself to be touch'd by a Woman, who had been a notorious Sinner, *Luke vii. 39.* And this is the account the Scripture gives of them.

St. Epiphanius adds, that many of them would Vow very strict Chastity, and Abstinence from the Partners of their Beds, some for four Years, some for eight, and some for ten. They were very watchful against all Nocturnal Accidents, and partly to prevent them, and partly to awake the sooner to Prayer, they would sleep upon Boards not above nine Inches broad, that falling or rolling off from those Boards on the Ground, they might go to their Devotion; some would stuff their Pillows with Stones and Pebbles, and some would venture even upon Thorns, for that purpose. Besides their Tythes, they separated their First-Fruits, and the thirtieth and fiftieth part of their Incomes to Pious Uses; and as to all Vows, and Sacrifices, no Persons were more punctual to pay or discharge them, than they.

This was the Righteousness of the *Scribes* and *Pharisees*. All this looks well, and hath a very good gloss. And one would wonder at

Διὰ τὸ ἵνα
μὴ σαματικὸν
τὸ παθεῖν ἢ
κλαπῆναι δι' ὁ-
νείτων φησὶ
τὸ ἴδωσιν σωμα-
τῶ. *Epiph. l.*
i. adv. Hæz.
Σαρίδας σπι-
θαμῆς μόνος τὸ
πλάτῃ. *E-*
piph. Ibid.

first sight, how *Christ* could find fault with these Performances. One would think, that instead of blaming, he should have commended them for so doing: How many Thousands are there in the World, that do not do half so much in Matters of Religion; and some would look upon themselves as extraordinary Saints, if they came up to what the *Scribes* and *Pharisees* did; so far are they from dreaming of going beyond them.

But have not you seen some counterfeit Pearls, so Artificially contrived, that the ignorant Spectator hath taken them for truly Oriental? Have not you seen some curious Limner, draw Insects and Butterflies, with that Life, that one would take them for living Animals? The same may be said of the Righteousness of the *Scribes* and *Pharisees*. As spacious, as glorious as it look'd, it was perfectly of the Nature of the Glow-Worm, and shined bright in that dark Night of Ignorance, but view'd by Day-light was nothing but a squallid Worm, a mere *Skeleton* of Devotion; which leads me,

II. To shew you the Defects of their Righteousness, and they will appear from the following Particulars.

1. They laid the Strefs of their Devotion upon the *Opus Operatum*, the bare Outward Task and Performance, without any regard to the Inward Frame; very indifferent whether their Minds at the same time were season'd with a due sense of God's Greatness, and their own Imperfections: Just as the People of the Church

Church of *Rome* at this Day will say so many *Credo's*, so many *Pater Noster's*, so many *Ave Maria's*, and fancy, they have done admirably well, when they have absolved their Task, though their Minds, or Thoughts all the while, like the Evil Spirit in *Job*, have been wandring to and fro in the Earth: And I wish, too many, who profess themselves Members of the best Church in the World, I mean, the Church of *England*, did not split their Vessel against this Rock; I am sure, the *Scribes* and *Pharisees* did: They made no account of the inward Frame, but rested in the Shell, and thought God would be pleased with the slaying of a Bullock, or Lamb, or He-Goat; and they measured the Goodness of their Prayers by their Length and Number, more than by the great Sense they had of the *Shekinah*, or Divine Presence, whereas an humble and devout Mind in the Religious Service, was the thing God required at their Hands, *Matth.* xv. 8.

2. They were very Zealous for the Ceremonial part of Religion, but very regardless of the Moral, and more Substantial part of it; hot as *Fire* for the one, cold as *Ice* with respect to the other. The neglect of a Ceremony, anger'd them more, than the Omission of a sober, and pious Conversation; much as the *Greeks* at this Day look upon breaking a Fast of the Church, as a more heinous Crime, than killing, or murdering a Man, and to this purpose *Christ* tells the *Pharisees*, *Matth.* xxiii. 22, 23. *Wo to you Scribes, and Pharisees, Hypocrites, who strain at a Gnat, and swallow a*

Camel: Ye pay Tithes of Mint, and Cummin, and Anise, and have omitted the weightier matters of the Law, Judgment, Mercy and Faith.

3. They were abominably selfish in all their Religious Undertakings, for all *their Works they do to be seen of Men*, saith our Saviour, *Matth. xxiii. 5.* This was the Worm that corrupted their Alms, their Prayers, their Fasts, their Self-denials, their Mortifications, and all they did, even a design to advance, and promote their Profit, Interest and Credit, and to gain the Applauses, and Admirations of Men, and though they made long Prayers, yet it seems, *it was to devour Widows Houses*, *Matth. xxiii.*

14. Their very Doctrines were suited to their Profit and Interest; As, *Transubstantiation, Purgatory, Private Masses, Indulgences, Auricular Confession, &c.* in the Church of Rome are invented to aggrandize the Honour and Profit of the Priest, so the Tenets they held, were accommodated to their Gain and Lucre, for they taught the People, that there was greater Holiness in the Gold of the Temple, than in the Temple, and greater Sanctity in the Gift upon the Altar, than in the Altar it self, thereby to oblige the People, to bring Gold, and Gifts into the Temple, whereby the Priests, who were of the Order of the *Pharisees*, sucked no small Advantage, *Matth. xxiii. 16, 17.*

4. They took care to purifie the outward Man, but took none to cleanse the Heart and the Soul. Such Acts of Piety and Devotion, as were stately, and favour'd of Pomp, and served

served to attack the Eyes of Spectators, they were for ; and of this Nature were all their External Severities, and Rigours, and Revenues, they used upon themselves. But, as to Mortifying their inward Pride, and Rancour, and Hatred, and Malice, and Covetousness, and love of the World, they were so great Strangers to it, that they did not think it part of their Religion, which makes *Christ* tell them, *Thou blind Pharisee, cleanse first that which is within the Cup and Platter, that the outside of them may be clean also : Wo unto you Scribes and Pharisees, for ye are like unto whited Sepulchres, which appear fair unto Men, but within are full of Rotten Bones ; even so ye appear outwardly Righteous unto Men, but within are full of Covetousness,* Matth. xxiii. 26, 27.

5. Tho' they own'd, professed, and taught the Law of *Moses* ; yet in effect, they preferred their wild and phantastick Traditions before it. Not to mention their common Proverb, That *the Words of the Scribes*, i. e. of their Traditionary Divines, were more *Lovely than the Words of the Law* ; where it was so, that the Law, and the Tradition clast, they Interpreted the Law by the Tradition, not the Tradition by the Law, and hearken'd more to the Dictate, and Suggestion of a groundless and whimsical Tradition, than to an express Text of the Written Word of God ; as is evident from what *Christ* tells them, *Matth. xv. 3. Why do ye Transgress the Commandment of God, by your Tradition, for God commanded, saying, Honour thy Father and thy Mother ; and, he*

that Curses Father and Mother, let him die the Death; but ye say, Whosoever shall say to his Father, or to his Mother, though ready to starve and Perish, for want of Necessaries, it is Corbān, it is a Gift, I have Dedicated it to the Temple, by whatsoever thou mightest be profited by me, and Honour not his Father, or his Mother, he shall be Free. Thus have ye made the Commandment of God of no effect, by your Tradition.

Indeed, where Men invent new Doctrines and Articles of Faith, there the good Old Word of God will do them no Service, but they are forced to make, and run to Traditions, and broken Cisterns which can hold no Water.

6. To Sum up all. They were very severe and strict in keeping some Commandments of God, but very supine and negligent as to others. They hated Extortion, but were Malicious to a Prodigy; they would not be Drunk, but were abominably Proud; they were for giving Alms to People of their own Sect, but look'd upon it as Sinful, to relieve a poor Samaritan: They were for strictness of Life before People, and Spectators, but loose and wicked in Secret; they abhorred Adultery, but were Slaves to Ambition and Vain-Glory; they bound heavy Burthens on other Mens Shoulders, but would not touch them with one of their Fingers, and while they pressed a severe Observance of the Sabbath-Day, forgot they were to rest from Sin, and Envy, as well as from servile Labour, *Matth. xii. 12, 13, 14.*

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Indeed this was one of their pernicious Traditionary Principles, That if a Man or Woman were but industrious in the Practice of any one Command of God, though they neglected the other Precepts, that service was sufficient to entitle them to a חלק בעולם הבא to the Portion of the Blessed in another World. To be short, they served God at the best, by halves, were quick-sighted as Eagles, in spying out other Mens faults ; but blind as Moles in discovering their own, and while they divided their Affections, betwixt God and the World, allow'd the World the far greater share.

These were the Distempers and Diseases of the Righteousness of the *Scribes* and *Pharisees*, and how we are to exceed them, is the third Particular I am to speak to.

III. *Except your Righteousness shall exceed the Righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees ;* and how, or, in what Things we are to exceed them, is soon guess'd at ; for 'tis evident from the preceding Discourse, that it must be in *Sincerity*, in *Simplicity*, in *Humility*, in *Charity*, and in *Universality of Obedience*.

1. In *Sincerity*, in being that within, which we seem to be without. *Christ* is not against external Devotion, hath no dislike of an outward Profession, never declared against decent external Ceremonies ; but he requires, we should be Devout and Serious within, as well as without, and take care that what we do without, do arise from a sense of God within ; and that a relish of Spiritual Things in

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6. To Sum up all. They were very severe and strict in keeping some Commandments of God, but very supine and negligent as to others. They hated Extortion, but were Malicious to a Prodigy; they would not be Drunk, but were abominably Proud; they were for giving Alms to People of their own Sect, but look'd upon it as Sinful, to relieve a poor Samaritan: They were for strictness of Life before People, and Spectators, but loose and wicked in Secret; they abhorred Adultery, but were Slaves to Ambition and Vain-Glory; they bound heavy Burthens on other Mens Shoulders, but would not touch them with one of their Fingers, and while they pressed a severe Observance of the Sabbath-Day, forgot they were to rest from Sin, and Envy, as well as from servile Labour, *Math. xii. 12, 13, 14.*

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the Soul within, do put us upon Devotion without ; that the Heart and the Lips, and the Hands, be all of a piece ; and moreover, that we use the same diligence to Mortifie our inward Lusts, which we use to restrain our selves from evil Actions in Company, or, in the presence of Men. In a Word, that we do not only pretend to Religion, but Practise it ; not only talk and dispute, and entertain our selves with Speculations, and Discourses of it, but Live up to the Holy Rules of it ; not only make Profession of it, but shew out of a good Conversation, our good Works with Meekness of Wisdom, as it is said, *Jam. iii. 13.*

2. In *Simplicity*, and having pure and holy Ends in our Religious Actions, and particularly in our Religious Severities, and Self-Denials, Ends suitable to the Holiness of God, and the Edification of our Neighbours ; in a Word, Ends Rational, and such as may be justified before God and Man. This is part of the single Eye we read of, *Matth. vi. 22.* Indeed, the Ends and Designs of Actions, make a strange Alteration in their Worth and Value, render them either Good or Bad, either Commendable or Abominable, either *Sacrifices of Righteousness*, or, *Sacrifices of Fools*. Christ is so far from discouraging his Followers from Religious Self-denials and Severities, that his Doctrine and Discipline presses nothing more ; insomuch, that the greater your Self-denials are, the better Christians you are. But, the right end, is the thing our Master presses, and insists upon. Fast and Pray, and continue in Prayer

Prayer a long time, spend whole Hours in it, if your Strength, and Sense, and Affections will serve; give Alms, and give very liberally; deny your selves in a Thousand Vanities, the World doats upon; Mortifie your Bodies in a decent manner, but take heed of secret hopes of Meriting by all this, and of secret Designs, either to promote your Worldly Profit and Interest, or to gain the Commendations and Admiration of your Neighbours, or, to make God amends for some Sins, you are loath to part withal. Have no Worldly Ends in all this, but let a Sense of your Duty, and your Gratitude to God, and an earnest desire to Crucifie the Flesh, to die to the World, to imitate the Saints of Old, to encourage your selves in a Spiritual Life, and to prepare for Heaven and Happiness. Let these be the Principals and Motives that put You upon all this, and you will undoubtedly exceed the Righteousness of the *Scribes* and *Pharisees*.

3. In *Humility*; not only in having a just Sense of our Errors, and many Infirmities, which render us unworthy to appear before God, without the Assistance and Intercession of a Mediator; not only in abhorring our selves for those many defects, which cleave to our best Services; not only in accusing our selves before the All-seeing Eye, as Wretched, Naked, Poor, Blind and Miserable, from a Sense of his Infinite Majesty and Purity; but also in having low and humble Thoughts of our Religious Performances, acknowledging that

that by the Grace of God, we are what we are, and that by the Influence of that Grace, those Performances are wrought, and confessing from the Heart, when we have done all that we are commanded to do, that *we are unprofitable Servants, and have done no more than what was our Duty to do*, Luke xvii. 10. This humble Temper the Scribes and Pharisees were very great strangers to, who look'd upon their Religious Services, as Things which God was obliged in Honour, and Equity to look upon and Reward ; Pride, Self-Conceitedness, and Self-Admiration, mingling with almost all they did ; and they did not, would not know, what a contrite and humble Heart meant, and what it was to lie low before God, with a deep Sense of their Unworthiness, and of the great Imperfection of their Services ; and though they Fasted often, yet that was not so much to arrive to an humble Sense of their Corruptions and Infirmities, as to increase their Merits, and to do Things which might Challenge God's kinder Inclinations ; and this was the Rock against which these Men stumbled : And as they were unacquainted with true Humility toward God, so they understood not, what it was to condescend to Men of low Estate. In Humility therefore we are to exceed them ; in Humility toward God and Man ; for, as there is nothing that separates more betwixt the Creator and the Creature, than Pride and Self-Conceitedness, for which Reason, God is said *to behold the Proud afar off*, so nothing unites Heaven and Earth, God and the Soul, more

more than Humility ; for thus saith the High and Lofty One, who inhabiteth Eternity, I dwell in the High and Holy Place, with him also, that is of a contrite, and humble Spirit, Isa. lvii. 15.

4. In Charity, or, a compassionate Temper toward all sorts of distressed Persons ; I say, all sorts, for that of the *Pharisees* was narrow and sneaking, and confined to People of their own Sect. I need not tell you, that Charity consists not only in giving Alms, that's but one part of it ; nay, it may happen so, that it may not be so much, as a part of it, according to the case St. Paul puts, 1 Cor. xiii. 3. where he makes it possible, for a Man to bestow all his Goods to Feed the Poor, and yet to have no Charity. Had Almsgiving been all the Charity, that was necessary to Salvation, the *Scribes* and *Pharisees* had been considerable Men, for they were free and liberal enough of their Purses toward Men of their own Party ; but Charity is a larger and nobler Vertue ; if it be of the true Eagle-kind ; an unfeigned Love of God is the cause of it, and the effect is ever answerable to the Beauty which produces it. St. Paul hath given so genuine a Character of it, 1 Cor. xiii. that it's impossible to mistake the Nature of it, except Men be wilfully Blind. It extends its Arms not only to all sorts of Objects, whether Friends or Foes, whether Relations or Strangers, but as far as its Ability reaches, and opportunity offers it self to all sorts of Distresses : It doth not only Feed and give Drink, and Cloath and Visit, but Admonish too, and Reprove, and Teach, and Entreat,
and

and Counsel, and Advise, and Help and Assist, and sometimes Correct and Punish. It embraces Enemies, and like the wounded Earth, receives even those that cut, and digg'd it, into its Bosom; and like the kind Balsom Tree, heals those that made Incisions upon it. It Judges favourably of Pious Heathens, much more of Pious Christians, tho' differing from it in Opinion; it damns none whom God hath not damned; in a Word, it works no Evil to its Neighbour, but is ready unto every good Word and Work. And in this Charity we are to exceed the Righteousness of the *Scribes* and *Pharisees*.

5. In *Universality of Obedience*; or in making Conscience of the several Commands of the Gospel, of one as well as of another, *Joh. xv. 14.* Then we exceed them, without any danger of being over-much Righteous, when at the same time, that we are fervent for Circumstances in God's Worship, we are not forgetful of the substantial part of Religion, when we do not let our Publick Devotion jostle out our Private, nor the Private the Publick; when we do not make the Practice of one Precept an Argument to justify our neglect of another, nor excuse our not doing Good, by our not committing of Evil, but are impartial in our Obedience, and cheerfully submit, not only to the gentler, but harder Injunctions of the Gospel, not only to such as are agreeable, but to those also which are contrary to our natural Temper and Inclination.

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The Pious Christian will not always get the better of the Righteousness of the *Scribes* and *Pharisees*, except his Obedience becomes larger, and spreads more than theirs. Had these Men carried on their Obedience to that Extent, I speak of, as *St. Paul*, a *Pharisee*, and the Son of a *Pharisee* afterwards did, there would not have been greater Men in the World than they; and the *Proverb*, which was unjustly made concerning them, would not have been altogether false, viz. *If there were but two Men to be Saved, the one would be a Scribe, the other a Pharisee.*

And these are the Particulars in which our Righteousness is to exceed that of the *Scribes* and *Pharisees*. If it doth not, we shall in no case enter into the Kingdom of Heaven. The *Danger*, and the *Last Part*, which will deserve our Examination.

IV. *The Danger.* Except your Righteousness shall exceed the Righteousness of the *Scribes* and *Pharisees*, Ye shall in no case enter into the Kingdom of Heaven.

This *Word*, one would think, should rouse every Soul here present, and puts us all upon a serious Inquiry, Whether our Righteousness doth actually exceed the Righteousness of the *Scribes* and *Pharisees*: If it doth not, we hear our Doom. And can any Man think, Christ was very serious in saying so, without being concerned, how to prevent, and escape that fatal *Exit*? All ye, that have any Care of your Salvation, and believe another World, and know, what the Terrors of the Lord mean,

mean, and what it is, not to enter into the Kingdom of Heaven ; Awake, awake, (why should you not, when your Great Redeemer calls ?) and take this Threatning into serious Consideration. Either it will be fulfilled, or not : If it will not be fulfilled, where is Christ's Veracity ? If it be, where is your Security ?

I say unto you ; Thus the Commination begins ; which shews, the Thing is firm, and like the Laws of *Medes and Persians*, unalterable. Our Master, even He whom we believe to be God, as well as Man, hath spoke the Word. He that is Truth it self, hath said it, and thus it must be, nor will all the Intreaties of Men and Angels oblige him to depart from his peremptory Declaration.

You that hear, and now read all this, cannot pretend Ignorance, that you did not know the dreadful Consequence of this Neglect. We suggest, we intimate so much to you ; we pull you by the Sleeve, we proclaim these Words in your Ears, as poor, as mean, as inconsiderable Creatures, as we are ; I would to God, they might sink into your Hearts ! We beg of you, to lay aside your Divertisements, and your Businesses for a while, and allow this Threatning some Attention of Mind.

If you go no farther in your Righteousness, than these unhappy Men did, not all your Cries at last, *Lord, Lord, open to us ;* Not all your Tears, and Calls, *Lord, have Mercy upon us !* Not all your Arguings, and Pleadings
with

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with God ; Not all your dying Groans, not all your mournful Accents, will open the Kingdom of Heaven to you. If you go no farther than these Men, by this Rule of Christ, you must inevitably be miserable, and all your Wealth and Grandeur, and Estates and Relatives, cannot help you : If you go no farther, you sink into a State of Hypocrisie, and I need not tell you, that the Portion of Hypocrites, is a very sad Portion, for it is to *be cast into outward Darknes, where there is Howling and Gnashing of Teeth*, so saith your Master and mine, *Matth. xxiv. 51.*

In speaking to you, I speak to Christians, *even to Men*, who believe, that to enter into the Kingdom of Heaven, is beyond all the Bliss, that this, or Ten Thousand Worlds do afford ; and, that not to enter into the Kingdom of Heaven, is to be Wretched and Miserable, Odious and Contemptible, beyond Expression, and to Groan in Torments to Eternal Ages : This is the Notion you have of these Things, as you own your selves Christians. Men, Fathers and Brethren, do you believe the Prophets ? Do you believe the Apostles ? Do you believe the Son of God, that came into the World to save Sinners ? I know you believe, and surely this is Motive sufficient to suffer the Word of Exhortation.

If therefore any of you have hitherto laid the stress of your Devotion, upon the External Task, and been Strangers to the inward frame of Mind, which is in the sight of God of great Price : If you have been Zealous for
small,

small, little, inconsiderable Things in Matters of Religion, and have wilfully neglected the more Substantial and Self-denying part of it : If you have been Selfish in your Acts of Piety and Righteousness, and been devout and good, for Worldly Ends more than from a Sense of your Duty : If you have taken some care to purifie your outward Man, from Clamorous and Scandalous Sins, and have been careless of rectifying what is amiss within you, even of subduing that immoderate Love of the World, and Pride, and Revengeful Thoughts and Desires, and Anger, and wrathful Temper, and other secret Sins, which do so easily beset you : If you have thought it your Duty, to observe some of the greater Commandments of the Gospel, and made no Conscience of the lesser. All this *Fabrick* must be pulled down, undone and unravell'd, and you must turn over a new Leaf, and apply your selves to a true Gospel Life and Temper ; else, there is no entring into the Kingdom of Heaven.

Flatter not your selves with the Merits and Sufferings, and Death of Christ Jesus, for poor Sinners. I grant, I own, this is a very Glorious, and comfortable Truth, and there is no sincere Believer, but confesses to thy Praise and Glory, O Blessed Jesu ! That there is no Name under Heaven given, whereby Men may be Saved, but thine alone. But still it is this exceeding the *Scribes* and *Pharisees* in their Righteousness, that must give you a Title to the benefits of the Death of Jesus Christ : By this the Pardon of your Sins, which was purchased

purchased by that Death, must be sued out, and applied, and rendred comfortable to your Souls; and, if the Death of Christ doth not kill in you that Hypocrisie and Partiality, which made the Righteousness of the *Pharisees* defective, that Death cannot, will not profit you.

All the Christian World knows, that the design of Christ's dying for Sinners, was, *That they which Live, should not henceforth Live unto themselves, but unto him that Died for them, and rose again.* They are the expresse Words of the Holy Ghost, 2 Cor. v. 15. and it is as certain, that you cannot Live unto him, that Died for you, except your Righteousness be a Righteousness without Guile, and therefore beyond that of the *Scribes and Pharisees*.

I suppose you are sensible; that Christ cannot contradict himself; when he spake these Words, He knew he was to Die for Sinners; yet to these Sinners, for whom he was to Die, he protests, *Except your Righteousness shall exceed, &c.* And therefore certainly, the Mercies of his Death cannot clash with our Duty; and whosoever means to enjoy the Benefits of that Death, must Die to the Righteousness of the *Scribes and Pharisees*, and a Righteousness more Rational, an Evangelical Righteousness must Live in him, even that which St. Paul speaks of, *Phil. iii. 9.* And that's *the Life of God*, as it is called, *Ephes. iv. 18.*

If we are to exceed these Men in their Righteousness, we must do more than they did, and if we do more, can we do less, than

what hath been hinted in the preceding Particulars of *Sincerity, Simplicity, Humility, Charity, and Universality of Obedience*? For these Qualifications rectifie what was amiss in the Righteousness of these Men, and set us in the right way, from which those Self-Conceited Men deviated, and wandred in a Wilderness of Vulgar Errours.

Should any of you be so Unfortunate, (what I say here, is nothing but a plain and easie Comment upon the Commination of the Text) I say, should any of you be so unfortunate, as to come before the Gate of the Kingdom of Heaven, and be denied entrance there; how like a Thunder-bolt would this strike you! And yet I see not, how it is possible to prevent it, if these Words of Christ make no impression upon you, or do not oblige you to go beyond these Men in their Acts of Devotion and Piety.

Their Righteousness was an External, Mechanical, starchy kind of Righteousness; it was not Free, not Natural; and they took no care to reform their Thoughts, Desires, Lusts, Affections, and such things as Human Laws take no notice of; and it's to be feared, that this is the Disease of too great a number of Christians: Nay, Thousands there are, which do not come up to so much, as the Negative Virtues of the *Scribes and Pharisees*: They were no Drunkards, no Swearers, no Whoremongers, no Adulterers, and yet, how many that profess themselves Illuminated by the Gospel of Christ, are so, and worse than so!

And

And if even those, who do not exceed the Righteousness of these Men, shall not enter in to the Kingdom of Heaven, how shall those, that are not so good as they? And but that Unbelief, and Stupidity reigns so much in the Hearts of Men, certainly here is enough to fright them from the Carnal Life they lead.

There stands before the Gate of the Kingdom of Heaven, an Angel with a Flaming Sword, as much, as there did before the Gate of Paradise, to keep out all those, who voluntarily chuse Death before Life, and do not you chuse Death before Life; when you had rather forfeit your share in the Kingdom of Heaven, than exceed the *Scribes* and *Pharisees* in their Righteousness?

Surely it must be a dismal and deplorable Condition, when Men have flattered themselves all their Life time, with hopes of entering into the Kingdom of Heaven, to find themselves at last thrust out, and may not this be the condition of some of you? And is not the very possibility of it enough to oblige you to Purifie and Cleanse your Righteousness, and to take care, that none of the Leaven of the *Scribes* and *Pharisees* stick to it?

Here on Earth, Men Fight for a great Estate, and venture Fortune, Friends, Interest, Honesty, Life, and all: Strange! The Kingdom of Heaven should lie under that Misfortune, that Men must be entreated to enter into it, and yet will not be prevailed with after all to enter. Yes, you'll say, we are all very ready to enter into it, were it not for the hard Conditions that are required; and do you

really think the Conditions so hard? Would you think them so, if you lay Howling in Eternal Flames? Certainly, nothing would seem hard then, and why should it seem so now, when it is evident and apparent, you are in danger of those Flames?

Behold! God is ready and willing, to succour, to assist, to support, and to strengthen you, that your Righteousness may Triumph over the Righteousness of these *Hypocrites*. The same Spirit, the same Grace, the same Influences, the same Assistances, he hath afforded to *St. Paul*, to *St. Peter*, to *Lydia*, to *Martha*, to *Mary*, to *Magdalene*, to the Jailour, to the Penitent Publican, to *Zachau*, to others, the same he offers to you all. But then, if these kind Offers be slighted and rejected, and a *Farm*, a *Yolk of Oxen*, or some thing worse be preferr'd before it, it is not God so much, that deprives you of the Kingdom of Heaven, as you your selves. Were you actually possess'd of this Kingdom of Heaven, you would wonder at the Folly and Madness of Men, who can complain, that the Conditions are hard, when such a Glory, such a Bliss, such a Kingdom is to be had, a Kingdom for which the Apostles, and the Primitive Believers, whose Faith, and Constancy, we Admire, forsook Father and Mother, and Lands, and Houses, and all that was dear to them in this World. I could give you such a Description of that Kingdom, as should make all the Glories of this World look pale, and dim, and dark, in Comparison of it: But I forbear. Were

Were such Considerations as these, made use of in the cool of the Day, I mean, when your Thoughts are cool and composed, and the Grace of God upon your Endeavours earnestly implored, they would inspire you with Courage Invincible, to go not only beyond Heathens and Philosophers, but beyond Scribes and Pharisees in Righteousness, and in the serious Exercises of Virtue and Self-Denial.

It's possible, you may not remember all the Motives I have given you, but one thing you will be able to Remember, which contains all that I have said, and that's the Text, and therefore I repeat it once more, *Except your Righteousness shall exceed the Righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the Kingdom of Heaven.*

I have such Considerations as these, which
 lift up in the roof of the Day, I might, when
 your Thoughts are cool and composed, and
 the Grace of God upon your Banners, ear-
 ningly implore, they would inspire you with
 Courage, Invincible, to go not only beyond
 Earth and Earthly Things, but beyond Heaven
 and Heavenly in Righteousness, and in the
 Pursuits of Virtue and Self-Denial.
 It's possible, you may not remember all the
 Motives I have given you for entering you
 will be able to Remember, which contain all
 that I have said, and that's the Text, and there-
 fore I repeat no more, I leave you Right
 and I am, Sir, Your Obedient Servant
 and I am, Sir, Your Obedient Servant
 and I am, Sir, Your Obedient Servant

SERMON XXII.

St. Matth. Ch. v. Ver. 21, 22.

Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not kill; and whosoever shall kill, shall be in danger of the judgment:

But I say unto you, that whosoever is angry with his Brother without a cause, shall be in danger of the judgment; and whosoever shall say to his Brother, Raca, shall be in danger of the Council; but whosoever shall say, thou Fool, shall be in danger of Hell fire.

FALSE Teachers without doubt are very dangerous Men. The Murderer kills the Body, these the Soul; and by the false Doctrines they Sow in Mens Heads and Minds, they not only obstruct their Salvation, but lead them into Perdition: Indeed if the Errors be light and trivial, the hurt that's done is not great; and while the erroneous Doctrine reaches no farther than Speculation, it can deserve no very severe Censure; but

when it spoils and sullies the Worship of God, or proves an impediment to the faithful discharge of our Duty to God and Man, Poison is not so prejudicial to the outward, as such Opinions are to the inward Man, and the better part. And such were the erroneous Doctrines of the *Scribes* and *Pharisees*: Blending the Traditions of their Fathers with the Law of God, and entertaining both with an equal Faith and Veneration; they made

i. e. Contradictions. an odd kind of Divinity, and quite perverted the design of Religion, which was to make Men universally good. This was particularly visible in the notion they had of the sixth Commandment, which they interpreted to the carnal advantage, and worldly Interest of their People, teaching them, that if they did but use that Care and Circumspection as not to kill a Man, they did not only answer the design of the Lawgiver, but would prevent the Penalty annex'd, and their being taken notice of by the Magistrate, and punished accordingly; but as for Wrath, and Malice, and reproachful Language, whereby Murder and such bloody Practices are too often occasion'd and promoted, these they told them were things not forbid in the primary Intention of the Law of God, and consequently they need fear no Punishment. To which preposterous Exposition our Saviour opposes his Divine Authority, proves the gloss of their Elders upon the sixth Commandment to be false; and shews, That what they thought did not deserve so much

much as a temporal Judgment, God would punish with eternal Vengeance, if not forsaken, or repented of betimes: *You have heard, that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not kill, and whosoever shall kill, shall be, &c.*

This is a Text upon which Criticks and Learned Men have bestow'd many excellent Observations, because the words relate to some antient Customs of the Jews, in their Judicial Proceedings against Malefactors and others: But as I do not think it proper to entertain you with Curiosities, so if there be need of making use of any of those Observations, I shall do it no farther, than they serve to elucidate some of the obscurer Passages of the Text, and make way for the practical Points I shall insist upon for your Edification.

As to the Sense of the Words, it's briefly this:

1. Whether we render the Expression in the Original *ἐπὶ τοῖς ἀρχαίοις*, *It hath been said by them of old time*, or *to them of old time*, as some Translations read it, the difference is not very material: for as by those of old time are meant either the antient Masters of Tradition, who lived some hundred years before that time; or the Ancestors of the Jews, to whom those Masters of Tradition pretended to deliver an oral Exposition of the Law of Moses; so if we read, *by them of old time*, the meaning is *You have heard that it hath been deliver'd, and said by the antient Masters of Tradition*: And if we render it, *to them of old time*, the sense is, *You have heard it delivered to your*
Ancestors

Ancestors and Fore-fathers, by those antient Masters of Tradition. I restrain, you see, this Passage to Tradition; for though the Sense of it is to be found in the Law of *Moses*, yet the Maxim, as it is related by *our Saviour* here, is not expressed there neither with that Connection: And therefore I conceive the antient Expositors of the Law contracted what *Moses* had said, into this *Adotto*, *Whosoever shall kill, shall be in danger of the judgment*.

2. What is said here of Killing, is meant of killing a Man, and hath respect to the sixth Commandment, *Thou shalt do no Murder*. By which Law, as the killing of Beasts for Man's use could not be intended, nor destroying venomous and noxious Animals, nor executing Malefactors by order of the Magistrate, nor depriving Men of their Lives in a just and lawful War, but an unjust depriving a Man of his Life; so there was a punishment suitable annex'd to the breach of that Law; which Punishment was to be ordered and inflicted by the Magistrate; and so far as the Law of God given by *Moses* went, all was right, and just, and reasonable; but here the Masters of Tradition had made a Distinction, that if a Man had hired another to kill his Neighbour, or had let loose a wild Beast upon him, whereby he died, the Magistrate was not to inflict the Punishment of Death upon him, but he was to be left to the extraordinary judgment of God; but if he killed him in Person, either by a Sword, or by a Stone, or by some other Weapon, then the Magistrate was to execute the Penalty

Penalty appointed by the Law of *Moses*, upon him; but this was not all, for they taught moreover, that though a Person who killed another was liable to capital Punishments, yet the Wrath, the Anger, and the Malice that prompted him to it, was a thing that deserved no Punishment, and therefore this was not a thing to be feared; and here came in Tradition, which mis-interpreted the Law of *Moses*, though it stands to Reason, that he who forbids a Sin, at the same time doth forbid the occasion of it, and all such things as do naturally lead to the Commission of it.

3. Our Saviour to shew that Wrath, and Anger, and Malice, and reproachful Language, were liable to Punishment, as well as Murder, and that God would certainly lash them, as well as the greater Enormities, takes notice of several degrees of unjust Wrath and Anger. The first is a sudden Effervescence, or Boiling up of the Blood, or some violent Agitation and Commotion of the Passions upon a frivolous occasion; and therefore adds *without sufficient Cause*, which though it be not in some Copies, yet must necessarily be understood here; not denying but that Anger in some Cases may be lawful, but shewing withal, that if the occasion of the Anger be slight and trivial, and the Anger even in a lawful Cause be excessive, and going beyond its just Bounds, it provokes God's heavy Displeasure.

But then if this secret Anger within, or the first boiling over of the Blood, proceeds far-

farther to contemptuous Words, and that a Man in Wrath and Malice gives his Neighbour reproachful Language, despising and undervaluing him, by using Expressions and Names, which wound his Reputation, intimated by the Word *Rakah*, i. e. vile and worthless Wretch; though I am apt to believe that an angry and threatening noise and posture is chiefly meant by that Word in this Case, the Sin rises higher, and becomes greater, and consequently deserves a severer Judgment; but then, if this Anger mounts higher yet, and from an angry Threatning Posture and Noise, which betrays Wrath and Indignation, it proceeds to the calling our Neighbour *Fool*, i. e. wicked and reprobate Wretch, deserving the eternal Anger both of God, and all good Men, which is the meaning of the Word *Fool*, in the *Proverbs of Solomon*; as the Sin becomes more heinous by this Aggravation, so the Punishment of it in the other World will be greater yet.

4. What our Saviour saith here of a certain Gradation of Punishments due to the several Lusts and degrees of Wrath and Anger, Judgment, Council, Hell Fire, must be understood of Penalties in the next World, yet with allusion to the degrees of Punishment among the *Jews* in this Life. Now among the *Jews*, there were three degrees of publick Infamy, according to the Nature of the Punishment inflicted on Men for their Crimes, and the more publick the Punishment was, the greater was the Infamy. If an Offender were brought

brought before the Court of Three and twenty, which was an inferiour Court of Judicature called here, being guilty of the Judgment, and there condemn'd, he was infamous, and a great Disgrace it was to him, but in a lower degree: If he were brought before the *Sanhedrin*, or the Great Council of the Nation, consisting of LXX Elders, in the nature of our Parliament, and by them adjudged to Death, the Infamy and Disgrace was greater: Yet if, lastly, a Man were condemn'd to be burnt in the Valley of *Hinnon* or *Tophet*, where all the Trash and Filth of the City of *Jerusalem*, the Garbage and dead Carcasses were burnt, and where antiently they offered their Children to *Moloch*, and where a perpetual Fire was kept to consume all things that were offensive and nauseous, and which by the *Jews* themselves was look'd upon as an Emblem of Hell Fire, the Infamy was greatest of all: According to these degrees of Infamy here on Earth, Christ shews there will be degrees of Punishment for the several degrees of unjust and unlawful Anger, in the other World; for most certainly this Threatning cannot be understood with respect to this Life, there being no such thing inflicted upon Men, for Anger and reproachful Names, on this side the Grave; and whereas the *Jews* were generally afraid chiefly of Punishments in this Life, Christ thought fit to acquaint them and us, that we had far greater reason to be afraid of the Punishments in the next, as more dreadful and more grievous than any

ny they could fear here on Earth. And this is the meaning of the Commination in the Text, *Whoever*, &c.

From the Words thus explained, arise these following Truths :

I. Antiquity is no warrant for erroneous Doctrines and Practices.

II. Murder is a Crime, which the Magistrate must by no means suffer to go unpunish'd.

III. Wrath and Anger without a just Cause, hath its degrees, and according to the degrees of the Sin, the Punishment in the next World will be proportionable.

I. Antiquity is no warrant for erroneous Doctrines and Practices.

The *Scribes* and *Pharisees* here pretended, that what they taught and practis'd concerning the sixth Commandment, was deliver'd to them by them of old Time. But our Saviour shews that this pretence could be of no use to them, but rather betray'd than cover'd their Nakedness.

Error pleads Antiquity as well as Truth, and though nothing be more antient than Truth, for it is from Eternity, and before ever Error appear'd in the World, Truth had the universal Monarchy, yet Error is as ancient as the Fall. As soon as the Apostate Angels forsook their Habitation and Integrity together, Error began to shew it self, which soon spread it self through the habitable World ;

World; when Man, tempted by the Devil, consented to his false Principles, and went astray from the center of his Happiness. No doubt, Antiquity is venerable, but it must be in a good Cause, and where Truth and *that* join together, the Argument is perswasive, and may be call'd invincible. But a thing is not therefore true because it is antient, nor doth it command Assent, because of its uncommon Pedigree. Sin and Error lose little of their Deformity by appealing to antient Times; and an Error is so much the worse, by how much it defends it self by the Practice of former Ages.

Idolatry, and all the Vices in the World, may shelter themselves under this Roof; and there is no Villany so great, but Men may find a President two or three thousand Years ago. The Priests of the Temple of *Diana* at *Ephesus*, called the Wicker-image of that Goddess *Minerva*, fallen down from *Jupiter*, merely because it was antient; and the Temple having been seven times ruin'd, and built up again, and this Image still preserved, was to them an Argument that this Worship must be lawful. Indeed, at this rate, a Man might even defend Sodomy with the Romish Archbishop *Joannes Casa*, because it was practised in the Cities which God destroyed with Fire and Brimstone, and the *Jews* would have had a good Plea for their Adoration of the Queen of Heaven, because their Fathers had been used to it.

This

This very Argument makes the Allegations of the *Roman Church* from Antiquity ridiculous, and they might as well espouse the Heresies of *Ebian* and *Cerinthus*, because they lived in and about the Age of the holy Apostles. When God hath given a Standard of Truth, that must be the Rule whereby Truth and Error must be concluded; and when that saith a thing is true, it is not its being revived, or taught but Yesterday, that can make it false; and whatever is contrary to that Form of sound Words, must be Erroneous and False, though it were as old as the Rebellion of *Corah*, *Dathan* and *Abiram*. The Worship of Images is not therefore lawful, because *Irene* a superstitious Woman 900 Years ago; got a company of illiterate and passionate Men together, who decreed it in a Council; nor is Sedition and Disobedience to Magistrates therefore justifiable, because *Gregory II.* Pope of *Rome*, in the eighth Century, shook off the Authority of *Leo Isaurus*, his Emperor. And therefore let none of you plead for any Sin because it is the fashion; nor allow themselves in Actions offensive to God's Holiness, because it hath been the Custom of the Country to do so for many Ages. This will be but a poor defence in the last Day to alledge, that you follow'd the sinful Practices of your Ancestors, or to say it was unmannerly to depart from that which was done before you for many Generations. To be sure, Men were good before they were bad, and there was a Golden Age before that of Iron took place in

in the World; and therefore if Antiquity be a motive, nothing can challenge your Embraces more than Righteousness, and dominion over your Appetite and Passions, for that was in the World before Mankind knew what it was to depart from the living God.

Murder is as antient as the time of *Cain*; yet no civiliz'd Nation under the cope of Heaven will allow of it, because of its Antiquity: So far from it, that in all Countries it is order'd to be punish'd with the Death of the insolent Creature: Which calls me to the

II. Observation, That Murder is a Crime which a Magistrate must by no means suffer to go unpunished; for it hath been said, *Thou shalt not kill, and whosoever shall kill shall be in danger of the Judgment.* The Substance of this hath been said by Almighty God, as well as by them of old time; and so far as God hath said it, it is a Law unalterable. Murder is a truly crying Sin, for *the Voice of thy Brother's Blood crys unto me from the Ground*, saith God, *Gen. IV. 10.* This is a Crime which Nature it self trembles at; and yet we see there are Wretches and Monsters, who can steel and harden their Consciences against the Horror of it: But God thunders against it from Heaven; and because the Crime is so great, he hath made a Law, and given it to all Mankind; *That whoso sheds Mans Blood, by Man, i. e. by the Magistrates, shall his Blood be shed, Gen. ix. 6.* Nay, if a wild Beast tears a Man, who is going about his lawful Occasions, in pieces, though an irrational Creature, God will strike

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that

that Beast dead, because it kill'd *Sanctius* his *Animal*, a nobler, and more sacred Fabrick. So tender is God of the Life of Man, nor would he suffer his Tabernacle or Sanctuary to be a refuge for such a barbarous Wretch. The Horns of the Altar could not save the Offender, and from the very Temple he was to be dragg'd to the Gallows, or place of Execution. The whole Country comes to be defiled by the horrid Crime, where it goes unpunish'd; and that Magistrate makes his Soul black with Guilt, that connives at the inhumane Action; or out of respect to Greatness, or Rank, or Quality, pardons the intolerable Extravagance: Where this remains unpunish'd, when known, a Nation falls under the Curse of God; and whatever Judgments befall them, an Ounce of the unpunish'd Murder, as the *Jews* say of the Sin of the *Golden Calf*, may be said to be an Ingredient of their Calamity.

We have a Distinction of our Law betwixt Mans-Slaughter and Murder; A Distinction, which I wish did not too often cover that Bloody Crime, which ought to be avenged by publick Justice. The Word of God knows no such Distinction; and tho' it provides for Chance-medly, and gives pardon to the Man that unawares, and without any intent to kill, proves the occasion of another's Death; yet this is nothing to the Act, which Wrath and Anger, whether sudden, or premeditate, doth produce to the Horror of the Creation.

Neither

Neither doth the Law of the Gospel, nor the Law of *Moses* in this case before us, reverse the Law of Nature; and God is so resolute, that the Magistrate shall punish such Offenders with Death, that where they do not, himself sometimes takes the Sword in hand, and executes the presumptuous Destroyer of his Image: Nay, many times makes the Wretch that did the Fact, and escapes the Magistrates Sword, his own Executioner: *Alphonsus Diazus*, a *Spaniard*, and a *Roman Catholick*, having kill'd his own Natural Brother for turning Protestant, for which he receiv'd the Praises and Applauses of considerable Men in the Church of *Rome*, haunted and hunted at last by the Furies of his own Conscience, desperately hang'd himself at *Trent*, *de callo Mula sua*, saith the Historian, upon the Neck of his own Mule.

It's true, there are those, who guilty of such Crimes, do yet escape the revenging Arm of God and Man here, but the more terrible will be their Cup of trembling hereafter: and God lets some, like stall'd Oxen, grow fat on this side the Grave, that with greater Terrour they may fall a Sacrifice, when they die, to hellish Furies. Nor can Duels and single Combats upon an Affront receiv'd, and Challenging one another to fight, be excus'd from sharing in the Heinousness of this Guilt; for whatever fine Names, and plausible Descriptions, the Law of Honour may have made of such Actions; he that kills another in a Duël, though he gets a Pardon of his Prince,

will be Arraign'd in the last day among the Murtherers, who shall have their Portion in the Lake which burns with Fire and Brimstone.

I do not deny, but that in the dark Times of Popery such Combates have been allow'd of, and publick Prayers have been said for success in such Duels, but what Credit can a Cause receive from Ages, in which to understand Greek was a Crime, and Hebrew next to Heresie? We need not wonder, that *Babylon* the Mother of Harlots should permit such things, whose Garments have been died Red with the Blood of the Saints of God, and which hath Tricks and Ways to Canonize Assassins, to consecrate Murther, and to Christen Massacres, Services of Religion. To call upon you to take heed of having a hand in Blood, were to discourage you from drowning or poisoning your selves, or running a Sword into your own Bowels, for indeed this is no better, and whatever varnish may be put upon it, it is precipitating your selves headlong into the Gulf of Perdition. There is in this Sin, all that can aggravate a Deed; it is to raise a Hell in your Bosom, and the thing it self speaks so much abomination, that to name the Sin, is to give you a thousand Arguments against it. But then that ye may not be under any temptation to this Sin; let bitterness, and wrath, and anger be put away from you with all Malice, which leads me to the third Proposition:

III. That

III. That Wrath and Anger without a just Cause have their Degrees, and according to them, the Punishment in the next Life will be proportionable, *For whosoever shall be angry with his Brother without a cause, shall be in danger of the Judgment; and whosoever shall say to his Brother Raca, shall be in danger of the Council; but whosoever shall say thou Fool, shall be in danger of Hell-fire.*

That some anger is lawful, is evident, from hence, because Christ himself was angry, and very angry sometimes, and so were the Apostles; and we are permitted to be so, but with this Caution, *be angry and sin not*, i. e. so as not to Sin, *Eph. iv. 26.* So that all Anger is not a mark of Damnation. But then when the Author and Captain of our Salvation, Christ Jesus, and his Holy Apostles were angry, it was only against Sin, and out of a Zeal to Vertue, and when Men were obstinate and would not be perswaded to do their Duty, and a Sense of God's Glory kindled the fire of their Passion; in which Case to be angry is a Perfection, and to be passionate, a Christian accomplishment; provided still that the bounds of that Anger be observed; and it's heat do not turn into Wild-fire; that it be not attended with unseemly Expressions, nor accompanied with furious Gestures and Actions. I do not deny but a Man may be angry with his Servant, a Father with his Children, and a Master with his Scholars, and proceed even to Correction; but then it must be, because they neglect their Duty, or

will not hearken to wholesome Admonitions, and when gentler Addresses will do no good; and the Anger must be more upon the account of their Sin, than out of any Desire to revenge; and it must be an Anger mingled with Pity and Compassion; and which ends in Prayer for the Offenders; and it must be free from Fury and reviling Language: And being kept within these Bounds, I find no fault with this Anger. But this is not the Anger my Text speaks of, and against which Christ levels his Commination here, for that's Anger without sufficient Cause, even Anger because our worldly Interest is not promoted, as we expected, or because our Honour and Reputation is touch'd, or because something, which gratifies our Lusts, is withheld from us, or because our vain Desires are not cocker'd and flatter'd, or because such a Person hath not given us the Title and Respect we look'd for, or because we cannot digest a Reproof, or because we are cross'd in our Designs, or because such a Man is not of our Opinion, or because he will not conform to our Humour. These are the things which commonly provoke to Passion; and this Anger, the farther it goes, the worse it grows; if from Thoughts and secret Grudges, it proceeds to contumelious, reproachful, and reviling Language, to calling the party ill Names, Fool and Rogue, and Villain, and Rascal and Knave, and Cheat, and Hypocrite, and such other Titles, as Modesty will not suffer us to Name, it becomes greater; and if from Words and Ex-
pressions

pressions it goes farther yet, even to Actions of Revenge, and settles in Hatred, in Rancour, and inveterate Malice; it then shuts out the Righteousness of God, and lets in the Devil, and invites evil Spirits to come and Lodge in that House, and the last Estate of that Man grows worse than the first.

And is not this the Case of abundance of you? Do not you see something in this Glass that's very like you, and resembles your Temper? and do but consider, what weakness, what impotency of Reason and Spirit you betray and discover by such doings? Is not this an inlet to *confusion and every evil work*, Jam. iii. 16. Is this the Christian Spirit? Is this to know, what manner of Spirit you are of? Is this treading in your Masters steps? Is this following his Example, *who when he was reviled, revile not again*? Dare you appear before the Son of Man in the last day with such a Disposition of Soul, never yet seriously repented of? Is this to resist the Devil? Is this to purifie your Hearts? Have you so learned Christ? Is this to be Children in Malice, as you are bound to be by your Profession? Is this to crucifie the Flesh with the Affections and Lusts, upon the least Provocation, presently to be in a huff, presently to let your Tongues loose, and to break forth against your Brethren in Language fitter for *Turks and Indians*, than for *Christians*? Is this to be meek as Doves? Is this to love one another with a pure Heart fervently? Is Hell-fire nothing but painted Flames? Hath our

great Master threatned it, and do we make light of it? can you seriously reflect upon this Commination, and be unconcerned? And is not this threatning a Call to Repentance? What a Mercy is it, that God will accept of a sincere Repentance after such Provocations? But how can you repent of your Passion, if you do not Mortifie it? How can you mortifie it, if you do not conquer it? How can you conquer it, if you do not strive? How can you strive, if you do not use the proper means and weapons God hath appointed in the Gospel? How can you profess sorrow for this Sin, when you fall wilfully into the same Sin again? Do you call a Mock-Repentance, godly Sorrow! Or do you take that to be Repentance which is separated from actual Reformation?

— Ecclesiastical History tells us of two Bishops that fell out, and proceeded even to reviling Language, and so parted; toward night one of them sent the other word, *Brother, the Sun is going down*; with that, the angry Man remembred St. Pauls saying, *Let not the Sun go down upon your Wrath*, and made haste, and found out his offended Brother, and fell on his Neck and killed him. The *Pythagorians*, though Heathens, did the like, for if they had quarrell'd one with another in the day time, they would not go angry to Bed, but shak'd Hands before Sun-set. Did Heathens do so, and shall Christians be strangers to this Practice? Flatter not your selves with this, that you kill no body in your Anger, so did the *Pharisees*,

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Pharisees, but must ye therefore act against the Law of Reason and Religion, because you do not run stark Mad? Do you own your selves Disciples of the Lord Jesus, and will not you believe what he saith in the Text? Hath he peremptorily forbid you all Bitterness and Wrath, *and speaking evil one of another*, and will not you obey him? Doth he assure you, that it renders you obnoxious to Hell-fire; and do not you think, what if I should fall into that Fire in my Anger? Are you sure you shall not? Hath God told you, that he will not strike you dead in a Fit? Do not you express all that's terrible by Hell-fire? And is not the possibility of falling into it, a sufficient Defence against this inordinate Passion? Do you hope for Christ's Rewards, and will you deprive your selves of them by your wilful Disobedience?

Did you go about mortifying that bitterness of Spirit like Men in good earnest; how could ye fail of Success? Did you pray fervently against it, watch against it, chide your selves frequently for it, shun the occasions of it, check it when ye find it rising, set before you the Danger and believe it: Call to mind the meekness of your great Master, and the wonderful Patience of the Holy Apostles in their private Injuries, how could your undertakings miscarry? Doth Anger according to *Solomon's* Verdict, rest in the bosom of Fools, and do you take your selves to be wise Men for it? O be better advised,

advised, and if the Mercy, the Patience, the Clemency, the Compassion of God toward you, cannot melt down your angry, your wrathful Constitution; stand in awe however of your Ruin, of your everlasting Ruin, and remember who it is that said and protested, and will Act according to his Protestation, *Whoever shall be angry with his Brother without a Cause, &c.*

SER:

SERMON XXIII.

St. Matth. Ch. v. Ver. 23, 24.

*Therefore if thou bring thy Gift to the Altar,
and there remembreſt, that thy Brother
hath ought againſt thee ; Leave there thy
Gift before the Altar, and go thy way ;
firſt be reconciled to thy Brother, and then
come, and offer thy Gift.*

TH E Religion of the *Phariſees* did not
expire with that Sect; though the
World, a great part of it, is *Chriſti-
an*, and yet abundance of us, not only *Papiſts* but
Proteſtants too, are meer *Phariſees* ſtill, I mean
with reſpect to this piece of Religion, viz.
Bribing God as it were with Devotion, or ſome
external Service, in hopes he will give us leave
to enjoy thoſe Luſts and ſinful deſires we are
loath to quit, and part with : This is pure
Phariſaiſm, to think, or to hope, that a Sacri-
fice will atone for the Pride we cheriſh ; that
a Faſt will exiate the ill Nature we indulge ;
that giving Alms will ſatiſfie for the Malice
we harbour ; that ſuch a number of Prayers
will cover the ſecret Grudges we entertain ;
or

or that such a piece of Self-denial and Mortification will oblige God to connive at our Unwillingness, to pardon Injuries. This is to make our Duties a shelter for our Sins, and to look upon God as some soft and easy Deity; who, so he be Honour'd in one thing, is contented to be Dishonour'd in another, and so he hath but a Pepper-corn, or some small rent of Respect paid him, gives Men leave to prosecute their evil Inclinations as they please.

This vulgar Error *Christ* confutes in the Text, and whereas the *Pharisees* thought that Sins for which the Law of *Moses* inflicted no external Punishment, by the Hand of the Magistrate, particularly, Rancour, Hatred, Malice, and Unwillingness to forgive, or to be Reconciled, might be expiated by Gifts, and Sacrifices, and Oblations, and consequently required no Reformation; since God would pass them by if a Gift, though never so small were brought, and by the Priest in the Name of the Offerer, laid upon the Altar: *Christ* to shew the Vanity and Folly of that Conceit, assures them and us, that God is pleased more with Mercy, than with Sacrifice; with pardoning Injuries more than with Gifts, and with real Charity more than with the costliest Oblations; *Therefore if thou bring thy gift to the Altar, and there remembrest that thy Brother hath ought against thee; leave there thy gift before the Altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled unto thy Brother, and then come and offer thy gift.*

The

The Sense of which Words will appear in this following Proposition.

If we have given just occasion of Offence to our fellow Christians, we must not think that God will accept of our Devotion, though never so Costly; whether Publick or Private, till we are reconciled, or have reconciled our selves to our offended Neighbour.

I say, *if we have given just occasion of Offence*; for that is the meaning of our great Master here when he saith, *if thy Brother hath ought against thee*, which is not to be understood of other Mens picking Quarrels with us, or bearing a Spleen, or Hatred to us without a just Cause, for so *Christ* and his Apostles, and the best Men have been used in all Ages, but if our Brother or fellow *Christian* have ought against us, that he can justly charge us with as an Offence given to him; in that Case, if we should not think of it, till we come to the very Altar of God's House, our Devotion, if we mean to have it accepted, must be forborn, or it is offered in vain, till a Reconciliation be sought or made.

I apply what is said here of bringing our Gift to the Altar, to any Devotion, whether it be Prayer, or receiving the Sacrament of the Eucharist, or Consecrating part of our Estate and Goods to God's Service, &c. For though *Christ* in saying so, alludes to the Practice and Custom of the *Jews* offering their Gifts, their Sheep, their Turtles, their Pigeons, &c. upon the Altar, the holiest place in the Tabernacle, or Temple of *Jerusalem*, yet since by bringing a thing, or coming to the

Altar

Altar of God, is some times meant Divine Worship in general, as *Malach. ii. 13. Psal. xxvi. 6.* the Phrase may justly be understood of the Publick Worship of God, nay any sort of Divine Worship; whereby we intend to express our respect to God, whether Publick or Private; and that want of Reconciliation in case we have offered a signal Injury to our fellow *Christians*, either in Word or Deed, renders the Gift, or Devotion we offer unpleasing, or unacceptable, will appear from the following Considerations.

1. Because the Devotion is offered from an impure Heart; want of Reconciliation, I mean a wilful want or neglect of it supposes a Heart full of Rancour and Malice, and secret Grudges against the Person whom we are at Variance with, or whom we have offended; and in this case *David's* saying holds true; *If I regard Iniquity in my Heart, the Lord will not leave me, Psal. lxxvi. 18.* Shall God, whose Purity is great, and astonishing, and infinite, accept of an Oblation, which hath so impure a Foundation? Can we imagine God is so fond of Services, as not to regard the Heart, which is and ought to be the principal Agent in the Service? He that scorned the Blind and the Lame offered to him in Sacrifice, will he be pleased with such blind and lame Devotion? It is not the bare Flower, (as beautiful as it's Colours may seem to be) that God is delighted with, if the Soil on which it grows be a Dung-hill. No,

Let's

Let's not flatter our selves, that the Building we erect, will be taken in the Eyes of the great Architect, while the Foundation is rotten. A Heart that cherishes Malice, is the impure Root, that sheds poyson on the Plant it produces; and that can cause no odoriferous Scent in Heaven. He that hath protested, that *an evil Heart is abomination to him*, will he relish the Water which comes from that bitter Spring? He that hath told us, that *the pure in heart shall see him*, and none but they, will he admit that Devotion into his gracious Presence, which comes from a bottom, where Toads and Serpents crawl? He that delights in nothing so much as in a Heart sincere, and upright, will he be fond of Hypocrisy? What is Hypocrisy? Is it not seeming to be good, when we are not? And is not Devotion, coming from a Heart unwilling to be reconciled to our fellow Christian, an appearance of Goodness; while love to our Brethren, the principal Ingredient which must make it so, is wanting?

2. Such Devotion is a perfect Contradiction. The Soul, that is a Stranger, or an Enemy to Reconciliation, and yet offers Services of Devotion to God, pretends to obey him by those Services, and yet at the same time disobeys him, by being unwilling to be reconciled. *Doth a Fountain at the same place send forth bitter Water and sweet?* saith St. James, ch. iii. 11. Of the Samaritans we read, 1 Kings, xvii. 33. *That they feared the Lord, and served their own Gods.* They sacrificed to the Great Jehovah, and

and to Devils, and their Worship was divided betwixt God and *Belial*; betwixt *Dagon* and the Ark; betwixt the Temple of God, and Idols. And is not Devotion, from a Heart unwilling to be reconciled, a Worship much like theirs? At once to obey God, and to disobey him; at once to honour, and to affront him; at once to worship, and to blaspheme him? To build with one hand, and to pull down with another: At the same time to please God, and to offend him; to please him with Devotion, and to offend him with neglect of Charity? Is God a God of Order, and will he be pleased with Contradictions? May it not justly be said to such among you, as *Elijah* to the *Israelites*? *1 Kings*, xviii. 21. *How long halt you between two Opinions? If the Lord be God, then follow him; but if Baal, then follow him.* But to think to oblige both, is to reconcile Fire and Water, Light and Darkness, Heaven and Hell, and things that have the greatest Antipathy one to another.

3. God is the God of Love, and will he accept of a Devotion coming from a Heart that hath no Love? Can there be Love there, where there is no Reconciliation? Can Charity be there, where the Man will not be Friends with his offended Brother? It was indeed said in Commendation of that *Roman*, that having lived so many years with his Mother, *he was never reconciled to her*; but the meaning was, that they had never quarrelled; never fallen out; so there was no need of any Reconciliation. But here we speak of Offences given and taken,

taken, and a wilful neglect of Reconciliation, must necessarily argue want of Love ; and can God love that Service, in which there is nothing agreeable to his Nature ? *Behold how good, and how pleasant a thing it is, for Brethren to dwell together in Unity,* saith David, *Psal. cxxxiii. 1.* It is pleasant to Men, and pleasant to God. He loves to see it, there is Harmony in it ; and can that Devotion make Musick in Heaven, which runs upon jarring, and Discord, and Animosities, and Dissentions ? God is Love, and where should Love dwell, but in a Heart that loves ? A Heart that doth not, is no Seat, no Place, no Mansion, no Habitation, no Tabernacle for the God of Love to rest in. The Spirit of Love flees from such a House. There must be a Similitude of Tempers. For God to dwell in a Heart where Hatred lodges, would be as unseemly a thing, as for a King to chuse a Dungeon for his Habitation. *I love them that love me,* saith the Eternal Wisdom, *Prov. viii. 17.* He that is unwilling to be reconciled to his offended Neighbour, cannot love God ; and God cannot love him, nor his Service ; *for if the Man doth not love his Brother, whom he hath seen, how shall he love God, whom he hath not seen ?* 1 John iv. 20.

4. Such Devotion, coming from a Heart loath to be reconciled, is a plain Attempt to put a cheat upon the great God of Heaven ; for such a Man hopes, God will be so dazled with his Devotion, that he will over-look the Malice that's glowing in his Heart. He hopes, that God will be so taken with the external

Service he lays at his Feet, not to take notice of the Abomination that lurks within. *Will you put out the Eyes of these Men*, said Corah and Dathan, Numb. xvi. 14. And may it not be said to such, *Will you put out the Eyes of Almighty God*? Do you think to blind him, that sees by Night as well as by Day? Do you hope to deceive him that searches the Hearts and the Reins? Is it a small thing to you to affront him, and would you cheat him too? Do you think to lull him asleep with your Devotion, that he may not mind the Leprosy which infects your Souls? Is he a Man, that you think to impose upon him? Or a Being so weak, that it's possible to gull him into Approbation of your Services? See what Absurdities Men run into, when they hope, that some external Acts of their Piety will cover the multitude of their Sins. Strange Men! Do not you own, that God sees the very Secrets of your Hearts, and do you hope to hide your secret Malice from his All-seeing Eye? Do you hope to make the Sepulchre so white, that he shall not spy the rotten Bones that lie concealed there? Do you think to make the Grass so thick, that the Snake which lies underneath, shall escape the piercing Eye of his Omniscience?

Understand this, ye brutish among the People, and ye Fools, when will ye be wise, He that planted the Ear, shall not he hear? He that formed the Eye, shall not he see? Psal. xciv. 8, 9.

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I N F E R E N C E S.

To draw some Inferences from the Premises.

I. What I have said, is no discouragement to external Duties. No ! Your Gifts must be brought to the Altar, and God must be worshiped, and honoured, and adored : God ; your Relation to him, and your Interest requires it.

God, the Author of your Being ; Hath he made you Creatures, and rational Creatures ; Creatures, capable of understanding Glory and Excellency above all created Beings ; and shall not he have your Homage, even the Homage of Prayer and Praises, and acknowledgement of his Authority ? He that spoke you into Being, hath not he power to command you ? Hath not he power to prescribe Rules, how you are to worship him ? And dare you deny him that service, which your entire dependance upon his Charity doth challenge at your Hands ?

Do not you acknowledge him, as the All-seeing, the All-knowing, the Almighty, the All-wise, the most Perfect, the most Holy, the most Blessed, the most Happy Potentate ; the King Immortal, Invisible, and who inhabits Eternity ; and doth not his Incomprehensible Excellency deserve Love, and Delight, and Admiration, and Adoration, and suitable Expressions of Duty and Respect ?

Do you own him for your greatest Benefactor, and the rich Fountain from which all things come, that make you Rich and Healthy and Easy, and Blessed and Glorious both in this World, and in that which is to come, and can you do less than apply your selves to Prayers and Supplications, and devout Humiliations before the Throne of his Glory? Do you look upon him as the inexhausted Spring of Bounty and Mercy and Compassion? Do you own all this, and shall you think much of bowing the Knee before him, and breaking forth into Celebrations of his wonderful Works? Nay, have not you found it very Comfortable to do so, to tread his Courts, and to worship him in the Beauty of Holiness? If you have not, ask those who feel and find, that one Day in his Courts is better than a Thousand in the Tents of Wickedness, where Plenty flows, and Sensuality abounds, and that they had rather be Door-keepers in the House of their God, than to divide the Spoil with the Rich, and with the Great? Do you take all this to be Fancy only; or do you think, that these are only Symptoms of brain-sick and melancholy Men? If so, whence is it, that such Men find Comfort, when the profane Herd can find none? Whence is it, that such Persons can rejoice in Tribulations, under which the careless Sinner faints and sinks, and casts away his Hope?

Look Abroad, and see who hath greater Comforts, greater Peace, and greater Consolation; (Consolation I mean, that's solid and lasting,

lasting, and can resist Storms, and weather the greatest Brunts) than those who Love and Admire, and Adore and Worship him, who lives for ever and ever?

This therefore is certain, that God must be Worship'd, and Devotion, and external Service must be paid him, whether it be Fasting, or Alms, or Prayer, or Praise, or a thankful Remembrance of the Death of *Jesus Christ* in the Sacrament. But then I add, that our taking notice of the Faults and Errors which some of you commit in these Religious Services, is no just Discouragement to the faithful Performance of these Services. Are we therefore your Enemies, because we tell you the Truth? Is it not Kindness in us, to shew you the Rocks you are to shun? Is it not Charity in us to acquaint you, in what manner these Services are to be performed? Do not you find fault with your Servants and Children, if they do not things according to your Mind? And do not you tell them of it, that they may amend and do better? And is not our Intent, and Design the same? Would ye offer Devotions to God which vanish in the Air? Would not you have your Adorations of him useful and profitable to you? and if so, then we tell you by the Word of the Lord, *that without Charity they are nothing worth; and did ye speak with the Tongues of Men and Angels, nay, could ye pray like Angels, and have no Charity, ye would be no better than sounding Brass, or a tinkling Cymbal; and though ye had all Faith, so that you could remove Mountains,*

tains, and have no Charity, ye are nothing ; and if ye bestow'd all your Goods to feed the Poor, and gave your Bodies to be Burnt, and have no Charity, it would profit ye nothing, 1 Cor. xiii. 1, 2. 3. That's the first.

II. Let none of you entertain high and lofty Conceits of your Religious Services, because they are called Gifts ; when *thou bringest thy gift to the Altar*. If they are called Gifts, it's not their intrinsick Worth or Merit, that is the cause ; but it's God's infinite Goodness and Mercy, that is pleased to call that a Gift, which is our bounden Duty ; and they are called Gifts, not as if we might chuse, whether we will offer them or not, but to let us see, with what Freedom, Alacrity, and Chearfulness, they ought to be performed.

That which makes a Gift very pleasing to the Person, who receives it, is the Candour, the Ingenuity, the Chearfulness, the Alacrity, the readines of the Giver. *I will freely Sacrifice unto thee*, saith the Royal Prophet, *Psal. liv. 6*. Dragg'd Services he doth not care for, and Devotions offered to him with an unwilling Mind, are a Smoak in his Nostrils. But the Votary that comes chearfully to his Altar, that with a good Will worships him, that runs to his Duty, that goes to it as if he were going to a Banquet with Joy, and secret Exultation, and like him *Psal. cxxii. 1*. *is glad when they say unto him, let us go into the House of the Lord*, that's the Person upon whom his Eyes were open for Good, that's the Man, whom he sees coming as he did the Penitent

Pro-

Prodigal, when he was yet afar off, the good Father saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his Neck, and kissed him. Such Services have Love at the Root ; Love that constrains, that forces, that compels the Soul to advance toward the Throne of Grace and Mercy. Such Services God meets with Euges, with Applauses, with Approbations ; such Services he calls Gifts, such he Honours with that glorious Title, not to make us Proud, but to encourage us to our Duty. But the Man, who values his Religious Services, as if he did God a greater Kindness than he doth to himself, and looks upon it as a Favour, that he will express his Respect to God in Devotion, or fancies God reaps some great Advantages by them, or performs them more because it is his Duty, than because it is his Choice, more because he doth not think himself safe without it, than because he delights in it, more to satisfy his unruly Conscience, than his Pleasure ; or in a manner angry, because God hath obliged him to the Drudgery of Devotion ; all such Persons have odd, sinister, preposterous Notions and Apprehensions of God, and mistake the Nature of their own Felicity ; the World hath the Ascendent of them, and something here below is dearer to them than their God. In a word, let every Soul, that approaches to pay her Duty to God, remember that *God loves a cheerful giver.*

III. See here how heinous this Sin is, I mean this Rancour, Hatred, Malice in our Hearts to our Neighbours, whom we have

offended, and Unwillingness to forgive, or to be Reconciled to them; I say, see here how heinous the Sin is, since no Gift can prevail with God to pass it by. It is very true, *my Friends*, Not all the Gold and Silver you have, not all the Alms you give, not Ten Thousand Rams, not a Thousand Rivers of Oyl, not all the external Services you offer to him, or lay upon his Altar, will move him to overlook it. *Therefore if thou bring thy Gift unto the Altar, and there remembreſt that thy Brother hath ought againſt thee; leave there thy Gift before the Altar, and go thy way, firſt be reconciled to thy Brother, and then come and offer thy Gift.*

- *Aristippus* and *Æschines* were both Heathens, yet hear what they did. Being at Variance for ſome time, *Aristippus* of his own accord goes to *Æschines* his Enemy, and tells him, *Shall not we be Reconciled, till we become the Table-talk of all the Country?* *Æschines* replied, *I would very gladly been at Peace with you. Remember, therefore, ſaid Aristippus, that I the Elder, and the better Man, have firſt ſought unto you. You are ſo, ſaith Æschines, not only the Elder, but the better Man, for I began the Quarrel, and you the Reconciliation.*

Theſe things many of us can hear and read; many of us that call themſelves *Chriſtians*, *Disciples of Chriſt*, *Children of the Revelation*, *Children of Light*; and that vow'd Obedience to God, over and over, and yet they bluſh not to ſee themſelves out-done by Heathens. Notwithſtanding all this they can
carry

carry *plumbeas iras*, as the *Comedian* speaks, leaden and lasting Wrath and Hatred in their Hearts; and though they have given occasion to the Variance, and been the Beginners of that Distance, which is between them and their Neighbours, yet will not be persuaded to forgive, or to be reconciled. Or if they be sometime by the Endeavours of some Charitable Friend, forced into a Reconciliation, yet that Friendship is, to use *Menander's* Phrase, *Lupina Amicitia*, a Wolfish kind of Friendship, which lasts for a little while, and then the Sore breaks out again. And yet such Men shall say their Prayers, and go to Church, and sometimes receive the Holy Sacrament, when a Place, or Office, or Employment, or some such carnal Reason, puts them upon it; a Profanation so great, that it is almost in vain to argue with such Men out of the Gospel, for they have not common Principles of Morality, they throw down the Bounds of Nature, how shall the Gospel over-rule them! Yet that they may be without Excuse, I must a little reason the Case with them. Tell me, then, ye Men, that name the Name of *Christ*, and dishonour and disgrace it by your uncharitable Temper, is it nothing to you that God hath declared himself your Enemy? Hath not he declared himself your Enemy, when he hath protested he will not forgive you, and hath not he protested so, when he hath told you over and over in his Gospel, in that Gospel which you pretend to believe, *that accept ye forgive your Neighbours their Trespases*, and from your

your Heart too, *he will not forgive you?* Do but read these Texts, *Matth. vi. 11. Matth. xviii. 31. Mark xi. 25, 26.* How do you forgive them when ye will not be Reconciled to them? or do you call that Forgiveness and Reconciliation, when after pretences of Agreement, you speak ill of the other Party again, and invent a thousand Excuses to evade the Obligation of a true brotherly Reconciliation, either that you will do them no hurt, or that you will not meddle with them, or that you will let them alone, if they let you alone, &c. And is this Forgiveness, doth this look like Reconciliation? Have you read the Gospel, and can you call it so? If God be not Reconciled to you, if this Gospel be true, you must be Miserable, and fall into the Hands of Tormentors; and God will not be Reconciled to you, except you Reconcile your selves to your Brethren, who have ought against you. And when shall this Reconciliation be? What, upon a Death-bed? A Death-bed! Go then and cry to the gods whom ye have served, and let them deliver you if they can. Is it likely God will have any thing to do with you then, when all the Charms of his Mercies, and entreaties could not prevail with you to be Reconciled before? Again, to what purpose is the Multitude of your Sacrifices? to what purpose do ye pray? for if you spread forth your Hands toward Heaven, he will hide his Eyes, and when ye make many Prayers he will not hear, for your Hearts are full of Rancour and Bitterness. And how dare you in the Holy Sacra-

Sacrament look the Lord *Jesus* in the Face, that *Jesus* who died for you that were his Enemies, that *Jesus* who fought unto you when you had affronted God, and wrong'd your own Souls, that *Jesus* who came from Heaven to seek you, and laid down his Life to rescue you from the the Power of the Devil, that *Jesus* who suffered the bitterest Torments to move his Father to forgive you ten thousand Talents : I say, how dare you look him in the Face, who have no Compassion for your Fellow-Servants ? Can you hope for any Mercy from him at such a time, when you do obstruct that Mercy by your uncharitable Spirit ? Ay, but this seeking to be Reconciled is so ungentile a Thing, you'll say, it makes a Man look ridiculous among People of the better Sort, to entreat a Person to be Reconciled when a Man can live without him, and hath no need of him. A wonderful Argument ! And doth not the neglect of this Reconciliation, make you look far more ridiculous in the sight of God ! Will it not provoke him to laugh at your Calamity, and to mock when your Fear comes ! And have not you a fine Religion, that makes you more afraid of the Opinion, and Censures of Men, than of the Wrath of the living God ? Ay, but I have endeavour'd to Reconcile my self to the Person whom I have offended, but he will hearken to no Terms of Peace. If thou hast, thou hast deliver'd thine own Soul, provided thou didst it unfeignedly, with Sincerity, with Humility, with bowels of Compassion, and from a Sense of the Love of God.

But

But now that I am talking of Sincerity, it will be necessary to represent to you the manner of this Reconciliation, that in case any be wrought upon by this Discourse, they may not mistake their Measures.

1. Then, according to the hint given in the Text, Here must be a Remembrance, a Calling to Mind, and Recollecting our selves, whether we have given any of our Neighbours, either lately or formerly, any just Offence; and that which makes this Recollection necessary, is this, because we are apt to forget, and to over-look Quarrels which are past, and consequently to over-look the Endeavours we ought to use in order to a Reconciliation.

2. Strict Enquiry must be made, if there is, or hath been any Variance betwixt us and our Neighbours; and this Enquiry must be Impartial, rather favouring our Neighbours Cause than our own; who it was that began the Quarrel, who gave the first ill Word, the first Blow to the Friendship, the first Provocation, the first Injury, and who kindled the Fire first. After it is once kindled, there are mutual Injuries offered, and the offended Party provokes the other by Opposition, therefore an impartial Enquiry must be made, whether we gave the first Occasion of the Breach, and if once we find we did, we may justly charge our selves with all the Evil which ensued upon it, and run and leave no Stone unturn'd, to reconcile our selves to our fellow *Christians*; for without it no Prayers,

no Gifts, no Sacramental Vows can be acceptable.

3. If the Party whom we have offended live at Distance, that we cannot speak to him nor send to him, then the Reconciliation must be made in our Wills and Minds, and with Appeals to the Omniscience of God: Lord! Thou knowest I love my offended Brother, and that the desire of my Soul is after Peace with him: And after this we may come and offer our Gift; yet with this Proviso, that if afterward we meet the offended Party, and with an Opportunity to manifest this Reconciliation in Words and Behaviour to our offended Neighbour, we must not be wanting in the larger Expressions of it.

4. If in the Offence given there hath been any Wrong done to our Neighbours Goods or Estate, the Reconciliation must be begun with Restitution, without which, if we are able to compass it, all Endeavours of Reconciliation are vain. Where no hurt hath been done to the Possessions of our offended Brother, the Practice of St. James's Rule is sufficient, *James. v. 16. Confess your Sins one to another.* Which Confession our Saviour bids us express by saying, *I repent*, Luke xvii. 4.

5. The ordinary Method of this Reconciliation is intimated by our Great Master the Lord Jesus, Matth. xviii. 15. First, We ourselves are to address to our offended Neighbour; if that Attempt proves ineffectual, then one or two must be desired to join with us in the Entreaty: If they cannot prevail with him, then

then the Church must be told of it, *i. e.* principal Men of the Society, we are Members of; Men of Probity, Gravity and Sincerity; and if he refuse to hear them too, then he is to be look'd upon as desperate, as a Heathen and Publican. So that,

6. If the Party offended be entreated to be Reconciled, the Person who hath given the Offence being penitent and craving Pardon, it is as much as his Life is worth, if he forgives not his penitent Brother. Nay, if the Party which gave the Offence should out of Stubborness forbear seeking a Reconciliation, after we have waited some time to see, whether he will be sensible of his Errour, and seek to be at Peace with us; if we see he minds it not, we our selves, who are the Persons Offended, are in some measure bound to seek a Reconciliation; not only because I told you just now, that some Heathens have done it, but chiefly because God seeks to the Sinners to be reconciled to him, even to the Party offending, and we are to be followers of *God, as dear Children*, Eph. v.

7. Even Superiours are concerned here if they have offended their Inferiours, there being but one way to Heaven, and in Matters of Duty, the *Prince* is equally obliged with the *Beggar*, for God is no respecter of Persons. And here I could give you a notable Instance in one of our own Kings, who having accused his Servant wrongfully, and charged him with Perfidiousness and Treachery, finding afterward, that he had wrong'd him, sent for him,
and

and being come the King fell upon his Knees, and formally begg'd of him to forgive him, and would not rise off of his Knees till his Servant had given him a formal Absolution.

8. This Reconciliation must not be slight and superficial, not meerly Negative, which consists in doing no hurt to the Person, we are Friends with; but there must pass besides, mutual Prayers one for another, real Acts of Love, of Kindness and Charity; and the Peace begun, must be preserved to the best of our Skill and Power, and this is the true Nature of Reconciliation.

And now, whatever Difficulties there may be in the beginning, sure I am, that when we have Conquered our selves, and our rugged Temper, and embraced him that was our Enemy before, nothing can be sweeter; and upon this Peace flows in the Peace of God, and our Prayers become sweet, and all our Devotions and Religious Services become sweet and refreshing, and effectual and comfortable; and our Hopes of Pardon from God become Solid and Rational, and afford true Content and Satisfaction, and our very Death-bed becomes soft, a Bed of Down, and a Bed of Roses; for now the Conscience is easy and free from the Burden that lay upon her, and presages our lying for ever incircled in the Arms of him, who is all Love, all Mercy, all Goodness, all Compassion: To whom be Glory for ever.
Amen.

ADDEN.

A D D E N D A.

IN this Sacrament particularly, you bring your Gift to the Altar; not only your Alms, and Prayers, and Praises, but you pretend to present your Souls and Bodies living Sacrifices to God: And is it likely these Gifts will be accepted there, when there is a Root of Bitterness in your Heart? Is this the way to procure the Smiles of Heaven? Is it not rather the way to procure the Frowns of God? to be sent away with a Curse, even with the Curse inflicted on the Man that came to the Marriage-Feast without a Wedding-Garment? Hither you come to receive Pardon, and to secure your Everlasting Salvation; but have not you read, 1 John iii. *That he that hates his Brother is a Murtherer, and we know, that a Murtherer hath not Eternal Life in him?*

SER.

SERMON XXIV.

St. Matth. Ch. v. Ver. 25, 26.

Agree with thine Adversary quickly, while thou art in the way with him ; lest at any time the Adversary deliver thee to the Judge, and the Judge deliver thee to the Officer, and thou be cast into Prison : Verily I say unto thee, thou shalt by no means come out thence till thou hast paid the uttermost Farthing.

THese words are an Appendix to those, which went before ; they contain the *Sanction* which is intended to enforce the Duty of being reconciled to our offended Brother, when Quarrels and Differences have risen betwixt us. Laws lose their force, without a Penalty annex'd ; and though one would think it was Punishment enough to threaten, as *Christ* doth in the preceding Verse, that without Forgiveness and Reconciliation, our Devotions are not, will not, cannot be pleasing to God, nor find acceptance in his sight ; which was the subject of our last Discourse :

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Yet

Yet these words contain a Communication of something more dreadful, which shall undoubtedly be inflicted on the Person that neglects to renew that Love, and Charity, which hath been broken by Quarrels, by Wrath, and Malice, and Offences given to our fellow *Christians*.

To apprehend the true design of them, you must know, that our Saviour having in the four preceding Verses assured us of the greatness of the Sin of inordinate Anger, and reproachful Language, and unwillingness to forgive, or to be reconciled to those, whom we have offended, goes on in the Text, prosecuting the Subject he hath begun: And that none might complain of Gods rigor and severity in casting a Man, for an angry word, or reviling Expression into Hell Fire, shews by what degrees God proceeds to the Execution of that Sentence, not only in avenging, virulent, and angry Expressions, and Names, and Titles, but uncharitableness, and backwardness to be reconciled to our Brethren, to whom we have given just occasion of Offence.

First, God offers Mercy, and is willing to accept of our timely Repentance; and thereupon to reverse the Judgment threatned: If we fall out with our Brethren, he will not presently take the forfeiture, and bid the Executioner, the roaring Lyon, seize upon us, but gives and allows time for Repentance and Reformation, upon which he is willing to be Friends to us. But if we delay that Repentance, and change, and forbear or neglect to

be reconciled to God and Man, his Patience then will turn into Severity and Vengeance.

For, as among Men, he that comes to terms with his Antagonist, and agrees with his Adversary quickly, yields betimes, and doth not stubbornly stand out against a Man more potent than himself, finds Favour, and Mercy, and kind Usages; but if he be obstinate, and inflexible, he is without any more ado, brought before the Judge, and by him condemned, and delivered to the Officers of Justice, and by them thrown into Prison, where he must lie, and perish, and never think to come out, till all the Debt be paid. So God is gentle, and gracious, and will not refuse him, that betimes acknowledges his Folly, which he hath committed, in yielding to the Temptation of the Devil, and the Flesh, when they tempted him to uncharitable Language and Behaviour. If by his Actions and Endeavours to be reconciled, and to be Friends with his offended Brother, and to live in Love and Peace with him for the future, he agrees with God, who is highly concerned in the Offence; he will find very favourable Dealings at his Hands: But if these actual Demonstrations of Charity be delay'd, and the Man care not for the love of God, and his offended Neighbour, is intractable and obstinate in his Grudges, and secret Hatred and Malice, and scorns to return to his Duty, God then will judge and doom that Man to Prison, even to Hell, where nothing, neither Men, nor Angels, can deli-

ver him; where he must abide till all his Scores be paid off, *i. e.* for ever,

This is plainly the meaning of our Saviour in the Text; so that what is said here is a Similitude taken from judicial Proceedings, used among Men, against their knavish Debtors, that are able to pay and will not. The Application to the present Purpose being very easy, it is not mention'd, but is in effect the same with the Paraphrase I have given in the Premises.

Before I go any farther, I must necessarily resolve a Case, which lies in my way, and to which the Text gives occasion, *viz.* Suppose I have occasion to throw my Neighbour into Prison for Debt, or some other Misdemeanour, must I forbear to do it for fear of giving him any just Offence; or if I have done it, must I in order to be Reconciled to him, let him out again, perhaps to the undoing of my Family?

I Answer, 1. That it is not altogether unlawful to throw a Man into Prison for Debt, or some other great Misdemeanour, is evident partly from the Practice of the *Jews* in the Text, not condemn'd by our Saviour, partly from the Publick Good, which would be very much Prejudiced without, it and partly from the Circumstances of the Person we have sometimes to deal with, which may be so, that it's better for his Soul and Body, to be sent to Prison than to go free, not only because he is thereby kept from doing further Mischief to his Neighbours, but because the
Place

Place he is confined to, may be a means to bring him to a serious Sense of his Spiritual Condition. For though there are Persons, who are harden'd by Affliction and Danger, yet where there is any Ingenuity left, Affliction is the most likely means to make a Man come to himself again. Yet,

2. This throwing Men into Prison for Debt is not a thing to be done Rashly, nor in Anger, nor by way of Revenge, nor because others do it, nor a trivial inconsiderable Debt; in all which Cases it is certainly Sinful and Unlawful; but upon very mature Deliberation, and when all gentler means are Vain, when the Person is very Vitious or Obstinate, and will not pay what he owes, though he be able to do it. To throw a *Christian* into Prison, who is fallen to decay, not through Vice, but by Providence, whose conversation is Harmless and Blameless, and who forbears Payment, not because he is humorfom, and will not, but because he is not able, this is Barbarous, and can never be reconciled to the Rules of the *Christian Religion*; in this Case a Man gives just Offence to his Neighbour, and must be reconciled, which cannot be done, except he lets the Prisoner go free, confesses his Fault to him, and exercises Compassion to his Fellow Servant.

3. From a Man's being offended at what we do to him, it doth not always follow, that therefore we have given him just Offence; for we may do our Duty, and he be offended at it, which must not be therefore forborn, because

he complains at the Injury done him by that Duty; as in the case of Reproof, seizing a common Thief, or Malefactor, &c. But then we give a just Offence when we do that to our Neighbour, which the Law of Nature, or of Revelation forbids to be done to him; and consequently in Prisoning a wicked Man for Debt, however he may storm at it and complain of Wrong, is no just Offence given, since the Law of Nature and Scripture doth not absolutely forbid it, and the Common Good which the Law of Nature hath respect to, sometimes requires it; so that if a Person Vicious and Brutish, and Covetous, and Illnatured, Base and Selfish, who is able to pay, and will not, and deals Fraudulently and Deceitfully, be cast into Prison, it is no Breach of Charity, provided still, that it is not Anger or Malice, or Revenge, or delight in Men's Misery, or some other base sinister End and Design, that is the cause of our taking this rougher Way; but love to Justice, intent to reform the Offender by Affliction, and care to prevent his continuance in Sin, and doing hurt to others, &c. And if there be no breach of Charity, there needs no Reconciliation.

It's granted, the Law of the Land allows you to Arrest any Man, that is indebted to you, whether he be able to pay or not, But may it not be said in this Case, as *Christ* to the *Pharisees* in the Law of Divorce; *for the hardness of your Hearts, the Law permits it?* but still it doth not hinder you from shewing Mercy. The Law of the Land contradicts not the Law of the Gospel, nor was it ever intended to draw

draw Men off from their Duty to God, and to their Neighbour; and since Charity is the great Gospel Duty, we must think our selves oblig'd more by what the Gospel commands, than by what the Law of the Land permits; and though it be a kind of Charity, to punish Malefactors, yet every Debtor comes not into this Number; nor must those to whom it is an Affliction not to be in a Condition to satisfy their Creditors, be confounded with the *Wicked*, that *borrow and pays not again*.

This being Premised, I shall consider what Use we are to make of these Words of our Saviour; and this will soon appear, if you will attend to the following Observation:

I. While a Man keeps, or maintains Hatred and Malice to his Neighbour in his Heart, God is his Adversary.

II. To agree with God betimes is our wisest Course.

III. God deals very gently with us, before he lets us feel the heaviest Stroak of his Vengeance: He both calls to Repentance, and gives time for it.

IV. Delay of true Repentance provokes God to proceed to very severe, nay to the severest Courses of Vengeance.

V. Hell is a Prison from which there is no coming out, till all the Debt be paid.

I. begin with the First.

I. While a Man harbours Hatred and Malice in his Heart to his Neighbour, God is his Enemy, or his Adversary. So much is evident from the Similitude here used, where what is said of an Adversary among Men, is *referr'd* to God; as

such a Person deals with a perfidious Debtor here on Earth, so God will deal with the Uncharitable, and Persons who will not be Reconciled to their offended Brethren.

Till Affliction and Trouble comes, very few People will believe that God is their Adversary: Indeed when a great Loss befalls them, or some painful Disease seizes upon them, or a Distemper that very much discomposes and disturbs their Minds, hangs about them, or some other Disaster, unforeseen, and unlook'd for, happens, then God from whom the Affliction comes, is look'd upon as an Adversary, and Men are apt to believe he is angry with them; but while Prosperity lasts, and that Sun continues to shine upon them, and Ease and Plenty are their Companions, and like officious Servants wait upon them; then God is a Friend, and they will have him to be so sometimes, whether he will or not. But as God's Favour and Hatred are not to be measured by outward Accidents, not by outward Want, or Plenty, so it is certain it may infallibly be known, whether God be our Friend or Adversary by our Obedience or Disobedience to his Holy Commands, let our outward Condition be what it will. So that if you live in Disobedience to his exprefs and peremptory Commands, it is a never-failing Sign, that God is your Adversary, *though you wash your Feet in Butter, and the Rocks pour you out Rivers of Oyl; though your Oxen be strong to labour, and your Sheep bring forth thousands and ten thousand in your Streets; and particularly, if no Argument,*

ment, no Motive, no enforce drawn either from the word of God, or from your Spiritual and Eternal Interest; or from the Examples of Holy Men, or from the reason of the Thing can prevail with you to be Reconciled to your Brethren, with whom you are fallen out; it is as sure as any Oracle in the Bible, that God is your Adversary.

Perhaps such an Adversary you like very well, that Crowns you with temporal Blessings, and lets you enjoy what your Flesh desires, and fills your Bellies with hid Treasures. These are the Things you are fond of, and you desire to be punish'd with such outward Conveniencies and Accommodations. And indeed, if this Life were all you have to look after, the Argumentation or Inference would not be amiss. But did not *Dives* live as Calmly and as Plentifully as you can do, and yet when his Body dropt from him, and was Buried, the Man, the unhappy Man felt what it was to have God for his Adversary. The very Plenty he formerly enjoy'd, became now an Ingredient of his bitter Potion, and he felt the Might of his Adversary's Hand; his former Prosperity was so far from being a Sign, that God was his Friend, that it gave Evidence, that he was his Enemy; and he that had formerly look'd upon him as the Fountain of Mercy, now found him to be a Spring indeed, not flowing with Milk and Honey, but with Fire and Brimstone; so that upon the whole Matter *it is a fearful thing to fall into the Hands of the living God*, Heb. x. 31.

And

And therefore certainly, to agree with him betimes must be our wisest Course; which is the

II. Proposition I am to speak to. *Agree with thine Adversary quickly.* Agree with God! Who would have any difference with him? Who can grapple with him? Who can resist him? Who can make his Party good against him? Poor feeble Clay! Shall it rise against the Potter, who hath power to make of it a Vessel of Honour, and Vessel of Dishonour?

Agree with him! The Greatness, the Majesty, the Excellency of God, one would think should be Motive great enough to labour to be at Peace with him! To be at Peace with him, is to be at Peace with our Consciences, and with him who hath promis'd to *make all our Enemies to be at Peace with us*, and can make all the Elements to be at Peace with us, so that the Sun shall not smite us by Day, nor the Moon by Night; so that the Air shall not infect us, nor the Water drown us, nor the Fire burn us, nor the Earth swallow us up. But then, how can we agree with him, except we walk with him? Except we be of the same Mind with him? Can we say, we agree with him, when God and we draw different ways? When he bids us walk in the Light, and we walk in Darknes? When God bids us do one Thing, and we do another? When God commands us to live in Love, and we maintain and harbour Hatred and ill Will to our *fellow Christians*? when God enjoins us to take to the strait Way, and we venture

venture upon the Broad? Is this Agreement when he bids us hearken to the Motions of his Spirit, and we are guided by the Suggestions of the World, and the Devil? And yet this Agreement will signify little, except it be timely, and while we are in the Way with him. To be sure to delay that which God would have us apply our selves to presently, doth not look like Agreement. To run those Hazards with God would have us prevent, is nothing but Contradiction. And what is it that God would have us agree with him in, without delay? Why it is in all the Vertues and Graces, whereof *Christ* hath shewn us an Example, and particularly in agreeing with our Neighbours, if we have any Difference with them. If we agree with them, we agree with him. And why should we delay it? Have we a Lease of our Lives? Do we know how long we shall continue here? Do not we see how uncertain every thing is, and shall we build upon Uncertainties, which in Temporal Concerns we count Folly, and can it be Wisdom in the greater concerns of our Souls? And is this a suitable return for the Patience God exercises towards us? And this calls me to examine the

III. Proposition, that God deals very gently with us, before he lets us feel the heaviest stroke of his Vengeance, he not only calls to, but gives us time for Repentance. This is also intimated by these Words, *Agree with thine Adversary quickly while thou art yet in the way with him, i. e. while he allows thee time to*
come

come in, and agree with him, which must necessarily have relation to God's Patience, and the Time he giveth for Repentance.

He might strike the Drunken Man dead in the midst of his Cups, and send the Swearer immediately into that Hell, by which his Tongue is set on Fire, and dispatch the cholerick Man in his Rage and Fury; send the Adulterer, Fornicator and Lustful, (even before their Lust is satiated) to keep Company with Devils, and bid *Lucifer* arrest the Proud and Covetous, as they are going up the Hill. But behold, he bears with you, spares you, cuts not down the barren Trees, as soon as they appear unfruitful, but prunes them, digs about them, and waters them with the Rain of Heaven; and by this Patience, he calls to Repentance. This we are assured of by the Apostle, *Rom. vi. 4.* Thus he hangs out the white Flag, the Flag of Peace before the Red or Black be shewn, the certain Sign of utter Ruin and Destruction.

And Oh! the Blindness of poor Sinners, that will not understand what this Patience of God means, that will not see in it his Endeavour to prevent their Misery! To what purpose is your Reason, if from God's forbearing to punish you, you do not infer his earnest desire to save you? Shall his Patience make you worse, or his Forbearance harden you? As soon as you begin to cherish any Sin, you are Children of Death, *for the Wages of Sin is Death, Rom. vi. 23.* and these Wages God might immediately pay you. But behold, what a merciful

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ciful God you have to deal withal! He that might immediately send you to the Place of Execution, waits to be gracious: He stops the destroying Angel, that is drawing out his Sword against you; and that's the reason why you are not consum'd in an instant: And will you make that an Argument of God's Approbation of your Sin, which is a most powerful Call to forsake it? What Stupidity is this, to make such an Interpretation of God's Goodness! Is it possible God can encourage any Man to Sin, or to continue in the ways of Death, who takes upon him all the Passion, and Grief, and Sorrow of a disconsolate Father, to let us see what a trouble it is to him, if we do so? And if it be impossible, his Silence and Forbearance to punish you, must necessarily be an Invitation to wash your Heart from Uncleaness. Why will you play with his Patience? You play with it when you delay your Repentance; and what the Consequence of this delay is,

The *Fourth* Proposition will tell us; viz. Delay of True Repentance, provokes God to proceed to very severe, nay, to the severest courses of Vengeance. For as it is with Men, when they will not agree with their *Adversaries* quickly, while they are in the way with them, the *Adversary* delivers them to the Judge, the Judge to the Officer, and the Officer casts them into a *Dungeon*. So God, when this serious Repentance is delay'd, and in despite of all his Entreaties and Beseechings, put off, as a thing neither necessary, nor convenient, seeing the Sinner incorrigible, he orders him, without
any

any further delay, *to be delivered to the Tormentors.* Though this is spoken particularly with respect to those counterfeit *Christians*, that harbour Wrath and Malice in their Hearts, and will not be perswaded to forgive, or to be reconciled to those they are at variance with, yet it is the Method God takes in all other Sins; if Mercy cannot win them, Justice must force them into a sense of their Duty; if Kindness and Gentleness cannot charm and melt, the Wrath of the Living God shall fright and astonish, and drive to Despair. And O ye Sons of Men I Why will ye provoke your Father in Heaven, to deal with you, as with hardned Malefactors? Will you tempt him to send Scorpions, and fiery Serpents among you, when he designed nothing but Rods to correct you? Why will ye pull down that Vengeance upon you, which God was willing to lay by, and to keep lock'd up in his Magazenes of Thunder? The longer you delay your Repentance, the more you hasten his Vengeance. What's the Reason, that God calls away so many, and summons them to Judgment, before they have seriously consider'd, why they did come hither? Is it not, because they have abused his Mercy, trespassed upon his Patience, delay'd their change of Life, and no Kindness, no Love, no Clemency, no Compassion will melt them into Remorses, Compunctions, and the Pangs of Regeneration? And how dreadful must their Condition be, when called away, to give an account of their turning the Grace and Patience of God into Wan-

Wantonness? Who shall plead for those, who have slighted Mercy, baffled the Entreaties of God, stopt their Ears against the Beseechings of an Almighty, and hardned their Heart against his endearing Solicitations? *O my Soul, come not thou into their Secret, unto their Assembly; mine Honour, be not thou united.*

Immediately upon their Death, God proceeds to a severe Discipline, and now the Torments begin, and the Artillery of Heaven is brought forth against them. They made God their Adversary in their Life time, who would fain have been their Friend. They were even fond of having him for their Enemy, and now they begin to feel the effects of their Folly; for what can be the issue of God's Severity against them, but being thrust into Prison, from whence they are not to come out, till they have paid all? This Prison is Hell, and that calls me to the last Proposition.

Hell is a Prison, from which there is no coming out, till Men have paid all their Debts.

Hell! A very unpleasant Theme to speak of! Yet it's better to speak of it, than to feel it; to discourse of it, that Men may save themselves from Terror of it, than drop into it. *Hell!* And is there such a thing? The Atheist, and the Man of Pleasure, is loath to believe it; and he hath reason, for if he should, it would spoil his Mirth, he would sin with trembling, and his Sensuality would be uneasy. But in despite of all the Arguments, such brutish Men alledge against this place of
Tor-

Torments, which they are loath to feel, there is a Hell, and there must be one, and every impenitent Soul shall find it by sad Experience, whether they will or not. There is one, abundance of Sinners feel it before they dye; and the dreadful Fire begins to burn in their Consciences. There must be one. Can there be a Government without Goals, and Prisons, and Dungeons? And is God the Governour of the World, and shall his Government alone, be without Places to tame obstinate Offenders? There are few so senseless, but are content to believe, there is a Heaven, and an Eternity of Joy, and they wish for it: I would fain know, how they come to believe there is a Heaven? Is it not because the Gospel saith so? And doth not the same Gospel say, there is an *Everlasting Punishment, a Worm that dies not, and a Fire that is never quench'd*? Did Christ speak Truth in one place, and not in another? Behold ye Men, who cherish Wrath, and Malice, and Hatred, and cannot be perswaded to forgive, and reconcile your selves to those, whom ye have offended, and who have offended you; for against you, the Text is particularly levelled: Behold the dismal Dungeon you must lye in! It is not laughing at it, will excuse you; nor making a mock of it, will secure you against the horror of it. You are Debtors to God, and will not discharge that Debt by Repentance, and turning to God. The place we speak of, is the Prison, (Oh that you would prevent your danger!) where you shall lie, and mourn, and howl, and fill the hollow

hollow place with your Shreeks and Lamentations. Here ye are not like to pay your Debts, for you will encrease your Scores daily; your Torments will tempt you to speak ill of God, and that will still make your Debt more dreadful. In a word, from hence there is no going out, *till you have paid the uttermost farthing*; and that's never. You may fancy with *Origen*. that this Debt will be paid in a thousand Years. Suppose the Torment were to last but so long, and that *that* was all that's meant by Everlasting Punishment; Is the Misery, or Pain of a thousand years a thing to be made light of? Ye that are not able to endure the Tooth-ache twenty four hours together, how will ye be able to bear the weight, the infinite weight of the Wrath of God, a thousand years?

Suppose it were to last but a hundred years; Would a Man of Consideration, for the Enjoyment of a few sensual Pleasures for twenty, thirty, or forty years, run the hazard of a hundred years Misery? Before I would do it, I would, if possible, out-live a Saint, out-fast a Hermite, out-pray a Monk, and go beyond a *Turkish Dervise*, or an *Indian Brahmin*, in Self-denial, and Mortification, But after all, the Temporary Punishment of Hell, is but an imaginary thing; What if some over-charitable Men have thought so, will their Opinion stand against the current of the Word of God, which over and over saith, the Torment shall be Eternal? Oh! that this were laid to the Heart by every Soul here present! To sit for ever
 I howl

howling in a Dungeon, for ever ! Without any hopes of Release ! To feel something that is painful, and piercing, and astonishing, like Fire, like outward Darkness, like gnashing of Teeth, and to feel it for ever ; what Man, that believes, and seriously thinks of it, can be so profane, as to refuse him that speaks from Heaven ; and after all these Descriptions of Hell, where Wrath and Malice shall be punish'd to the purpose, keep and cherish those evil Spirits in his Bosom ? The very possibility of falling into such a Prison, is enough to put a Man upon a serious Study, how to be wise unto Salvation : How then should the certainty of it work upon us all ! I feel a kind of Horror upon my Spirits, while I talk of it ; and that even forces me to stop, and conclude with the Prayer, or Petition of our *Litany*. *From all evil and Mischief, from Sin, from the Craft and Assaults of the Devil, from thy Wrath, and from Everlasting Damnation, Good Lord deliver us.*

SER.

SERMON XXV.

St. Matth. Ch. v. Ver. 27, 28.

You have heard, that it hath been said by them of old time, thou shalt not commit Adultery; but I say unto you, that whosoever looketh on a Woman to lust after her, hath committed Adultery with her already in his Heart.

LUST and Revenge proceed from the same Cause: That which makes Men revengeful, makes them lustful; Wrath and Concupiscence have the same Father, and Original, even a hot, fiery Temper, and Constitution, heightned by ill Company, nourished by high Fare, cherished by Intemperance in eating and drinking, and encreased by Luxury. And because these two Sins are so near of kin, they are joined in the Decalogue, or the Moral Law of Moses; one immediately follows the other; and the Law against Adultery is subjoin'd to that of Murder, the effect of Wrath and Revenge, as the other is of Lust and Lasciviousness. And in this Order our Saviour treats of these two Sins

in his Sermon on the Mount. What Precepts he hath given, what Injunctions, what Warnings, what Cautions, what Admonitions, what Sanctions about inordinate Wrath, and Anger, and Hatred, and Malice, reproachful Names, and Titles, and Expressions, and unwillingness to forgive, and to be reconciled, ye have heard already, this having been the subject of divers preceding Discourses.

As the *Scribes* and *Pharisees* by their Explications and Traditions, had corrupted the sixth Commandment, and introduced monstrous Errors and Abuses among the *Jewish* People; so they dealt with the seventh level'd against Adultery, which they restrain'd to the outward Act, not concerning themselves much about Lasciviousness or adulterous Thoughts, Desires, Lusts, Affection, &c. Nor did they teach the People their Duty, as to these Particulars. And because the antient Masters of Tradition had deliver'd the Law against Adultery with these Glosses, *Christ* quotes that Commandment not in the usual Style, *it is written*, But with this Circumscription, *ye have heard that it hath been said by them of old time*, i. e. Your Ancestors, who lived when Religion was low, and Corruptions and Abuses crept into their Worship and Devotion, have taught you, that the outward Act of Adultery is the great thing you are to dread, and to be afraid of; and with this partial Sense they have handed down to you this Command of God, *Thou shalt not commit Adultery*. But I say unto you, that whosoever looks on a Woman, to Lust after her, hath
already

already committed Adultery with her in his Heart
For the understanding of which words, I shall enquire,

I. In what sense *Christ* speaks here of Adultery.

II. I shall consider the Justice of this Verdict, or the reasonableness of this Censure,
That whosoever looketh on a Woman, hath already committed with her Adultery in his Heart.

III. Whether, notwithstanding all this, there is not some difference betwixt Adultery in the Heart, and the outward Act, as to the heinousness of it.

I. In what sense *Christ* doth speak here of Adultery. *Adultery* properly is a violation of the Marriage Bed, when either one, or both of the married Parties commit Folly in *Israel*, either with a Person married to another, or with one that is not married? But as $\alpha\delta\upsilon\lambda\epsilon\tau\epsilon\iota$ in the Hebrew, and *μοιχεύειν* in the Greek, which we render *Adultery*, is of a larger Extent and Signification; and imports not only Adultery in the strictest sense, but Fornication too; which is either a single Person's being joined to a common Harlot, or violating the Chastity of a Person of civil Education; and indeed any Carnal Conjunction, or mixture *to fulfil the Lusts of the Flesh*, out of the compass and Bond of Matrimony; So in all probability *Christ* aims farther, and means more by this word, than a bare Violation of the Marriage Bed; not only because he intends in this Sermon to give us a perfect Rule to walk by, but because the *Jews* in that Age restrain'd not only the

Law against Adultery, but even that against Fornication, and other Mixtures, and Carnal Conjunctions not Matrimonial, whether Incestuous or otherwise, to the outward Act only ; as if in matters of Uncleanness, that only was chiefly forbid, and deserved God's Anger and Indignation, and the consequent of it, *Damnation*.

And therefore the reason, why *Christ* makes mention of *Adultery* only, is not, because the *Jews* in those times look'd upon single Fornication as a trifling Sin, or *Peccadillo* ; No ! The *Pharisees*, though bad enough, yet were not so bad as to allow of, or connive at Fornication ; for the Law of *Moses* had made express Proviso's against it. *There shall not be a Whore of the Daughters of the Children of Israel*, saith God, *Deut. xxiii. 17. Thou shalt not prostitute thy Daughter to cause her to be a Whore. Levit. xix. 20.* And when, particularly the Daughter of a Priest, had committed Whoredom, *she was to be burnt with Fire, Levit. xxi. 9.* Moreover, whoever had deflowered a Virgin, no Slave, no Foreigner, but one of the Stock of *Abraham*, whether Servant, or other, he was obliged to marry her, *Exod. xxii. 16.* a Law so reasonable, that even the *Heathens*, the *Athenians* transcribed it into their Pandects, or Statute Book. And when the Father of the Maiden thus vitiated, would not consent to her being married to the Person who had abused her, the Person who had humbled her was to give the Maiden whom he had deflowered, a Dowry, as if he had been actually married

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to her. And when in one day three and twenty thousand fell, i. e. were slain by an Angel, the Apostle saith, *it was for Fornication*, 1 Cor. x. 8. Nay, if a Virgin had suffered her self to be defloured before Marriage, and the Crime was found out after she was Married, *she was to be stoned to Death*, Deut. xxii. 21.

So that I say, the reason why *Christ* doth make mention only of *Adultery* in the Text, is not because the *Jews* than look'd upon Fornication as a trivial and inconsiderable Fault, but he finds fault with their sinister Interpretation of the Law of God; even because they confined the Prohibition of Adultery, Fornication, Incest, and other Practical Lewdness, and carnal Pollutions, to the outward Act only; and look'd upon adulterous and lewd Desires, Lusts, Passions, Affections, &c. as things of no Moment; and which might easily be expiated by Sacrifices, and other cheap Devotions, such as Lustrations, Purifications, &c. And here comes in *Christ's* Censure, that the very Desires in the Heart after this forbidden Fruit, were as bad as the outward Act it self. The

IId. Part I am to speak to. *Whosoever looketh on a Woman to lust after her, hath already committed Adultery with her in his Heart.* To understand the reasonableness of this Censure, we are to note,

1. That the bare looking on a Woman, is not sinful; for as *Terrullian* observes, a *Christian* may look safely on a Woman, whose Heart is blinded, or hardened against Lasciviousness. The bare Looks cannot well be avoided, it's

one end for which our Sight was given, that we might look one upon another : But it's the abuse of the Eyes and Looks, that is forbid. It's true, through the Eyes the Poison is conveyed to the Heart, according to the old saying, *Oculi sunt in amore Duces, the Eyes are the Guides in Love* ; but still this depends upon a Man's choice, whether he will make his Eyes Windows to let in wholsom, or infectious Air. St. Peter speaks of *Eyes full of Adultery*, 2 Pet. ii. 14. but it's meant of Eyes that are first corrupted by the Will. Where a Christian doth *Oculum metu temperare, temper and moderate, and curb, and restrain his Eye with a holy Fear, and Watchfulness*, he may look upon the greatest Beauty without danger, saith Tertul. And therefore,

2. It is added, *Whosoever looketh after a Woman to lust after her, &c.* So that if the Looks cause secret, lewd Purposes, Desires and Lusts, and Affections in the Mind and Will, the Adultery, or Fornication is actually committed in the Heart, though the outward Act is, and may be impeded or hindred by Circumstances, and occasional Causes, which fall out cross. I need not tell you, that what is said here of looking on a Woman to lust after her, is not to be understood of the chaste Desires of Persons lawfully married, one after another ; for *Marriage is Honourable, and the Bed undefiled ; but Whoremongers, and Adulterers God will Judge*, Heb. xiii. 4. *And to avoid Fornication, let every Man have his own Wife, and every Woman her own Husband*, saith St. Paul, 1 Cor. vii. 2. And drink

drink Water out of thine own Cistern, and running Waters out of thine own Well. Let thy Fountain be always blessed, and rejoice with the Wife of thy Youth; and let her be unto thee as the loving Hind, and as the pleasant Roe, and be thou always ravished with her Love, Prov. v. 15, 17, 18. But the Sin here aimed at, lies in the secret Wishes, Will, Purposes, Lust, and Desires after Adultery, Fornication, Uncleaness, and forbidden Mixtures: And therefore, if the Observation of the *Jews* be true, that *Ahab*, and *Zedekiah*, mentioned *Jer. xxix. 21.* were the Persons who attempted the Chastity of *Susanna*, are charged with downright Adultery, because they intended it, though they could not compass it; as we see, *Jer. xxix. 23.* And he that purposes to solicit a Woman to that which God counts Abomination; or wishes to enjoy the dangerous Love of the Person which hath no Matrimonial Relation to him; or whose Desires Languish, because he cannot gratifie his base Lust, which his wicked Mind desires; or who feeds himself with impure Imaginations; with obscene Pictures and Images of the Person upon whom his Heart is set; all these are secret Adulterers, and Fornicators, and must expect the Wrath of God, the Anger, the Indignation, the Fire, the Brimstone, and the Portion of Misery designed for Adulterers, and Fornicators, who are outwardly so.

3. That this is a very just Sentence, and that he is justly charged with the guilt of Adultery, and Fornication, and Lewdness, who

who Wills, or Wishe, or Desires it, whatever Notion they are represented under, is evident from hence, because the Will is the principal Agent in the Action; so that if the Will consents, the Man consents, and it is as much as if he had done the unlawful Act; which is only impeded, or hindred from being executed by certain Circumstances which fall out cross. I very much question, whether the outward Acts of Fornication and Adultery would be Sins at all, if it were not for the Will. It's this gives the Act the tincture of Hell. Before the outward Act, the Malice, and the Turpitude of the Sin is already compleated, though the Act be hindred by accidental Causes from being consummated. And this is no new Doctrine; the very Heathens saw the reasonableness of it; and to this purpose several excellent Sayings, might be alledged here out of *Aristophanes*, *Seneca*, *Juvenal*, *Ovid*, and others, were it necessary; and though humane Laws lay no Penalty upon the Will, because they are no competent Judges of it, nothing falling under the Cognisance of the publick Magistrate, but Overt Actions; yet with respect to God, who sees the Heart, the Sin is the same; and he that would, or hath a mind to commit Adultery, Fornication, Lewdness, whatever Names he may give his Desires and Lusts, is the Person who hath committed all these, because all that was in his power to do toward it, he hath done, *i. e.* his Will, Consent, and Desire do concur to the Sin, though an Opportunity of finishing the Sin

Sin outwardly be wanting. And God counts such a Person an Adulterer, and Fornicator, and lewd Man, though his Neighbours at the same time, who know nothing of his secret Sins, may count him Honest, and Sober, and Innocent. The *Romans* punish'd a Vestal Virgin, who had vow'd perpetual Chastity, with Death, because she did once merrily in Company, say, *that it was a pretty thing to Marry*; because by saying so, she discover'd her Desire, and Will to break her Vow. I do not justify that piece of Rigor, but only mention it, to prove, that the very Light of Nature discovered to *Heathens* and *Pagans*, that the Desire, and Will to commit a Sin, was a compleat Sin, so far as the inward Man could make it; and consequently deserv'd the same Punishment. This leads me to discourse of the

III^d Particular, *viz.* Whether notwithstanding all this, there be not a very great difference betwixt the internal Consent, and the outward Act, as to the heinousness of the Sin.

To this the Answer is, that Sins as to the Substance may be the same, yet Circumstances may make the Sin more heinous than it would have been without those Circumstances. *He that hates his Brother, is a Murtherer*, saith St. John, 1 *John* iii. 15. Yet there is no doubt, he that besides that Hatred doth actually deprive him of Life, is a greater Sinner, and the Sin becomes more black and dreadful. So it is in Adultery and Fornication, and Incest, and Carnal self-pollutions, and other Lewdnesses. He that wishes, or wills it, or
purposes,

purposes it, or feeds himself with filthy Images of any of these Sins, commits a Sin of the same Nature, and Complexion, that he doth, who to the inward Formation of it, adds the outward Act; but still, the outward Act, aggravates it, and gives it a deeper Dye, because of the Scandal it gives, and the greater hurt it doth, in that another Person is made a Partner of the Folly, and dragg'd with him into Hell, and the Sinner goes as far in it as he can. So that though, as to the degrees of the Heinousness of the Sin, there is a difference betwixt the internal Consent, and the outward Act; yet the Sin is the same in Substance, and therefore must be supposed to participate of the same Punishment which is threatned to Adulterers, Fornicators, &c. though according to the degrees of the blackness of the Crime, the Punishments in the other World will be proportionable.

INFERENCES.

1. Here we see how necessary *Solomon's Rule* is, *Prov. iv. 23. Keep thy Heart with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of Life.* The Heart being guarded, the whole Man is safe. If that be left Defenceless, the whole Man lies open to the Devil's Power. In the Heart or Mind Sin first takes Root, and then if not checkt, it presently spreads and diffuses it self into the outward Man, and brings forth fruit unto Death. Keep Sin out of the Heart, and you keep it out of the Body; *for from within,*
from

from the Heart proceed evil Thoughts, Murders, Adulteries, Covetousness, &c. saith our Saviour, *Marc. vii. 21.* When Sin first offers it self to the Mind and is rejected; as soon as it doth make its first Appearance, the purity of the Soul is preserv'd. We cannot hinder the Motions and Suggestions of the Devil from approaching or assaulting our Minds, and an impure Thought, may jog the Mind; but if the Mind do immediately oppose the Enemy, as soon as it comes before the Gait of the House, its Forces are broke and disordered, and they can never make head, or insinuate into the Affections; our Saviour therefore charges us to cleanse the inside of the Dish, and Platter, that the out-side may be clean also. And indeed a Man or Woman cannot be truly said to stand in awe of God, that do not watch over their Hearts; and resist the first Assaults of Sin, and though I will not deny, that restraining the outward Act, upon the account of its Odiousness and Danger, may be called part of the fear of God, yet it is but a very imperfect Fear, till the Heart comes to detest the first Suggestions. In the Sin of unlawful Lust, this is particularly to be observed; and he that means to get the Mastery, of a lascivious Temptation, must be concerned, and tremble upon the first Insinuations of it, and the dangerous Spark as soon as thrown in must be shaken out of their Bosom. Lust in some Persons is naturally stronger, than it is in others, and its Motions more violent in one Man than in another; where it is so, greater

greater care must be used; but still the chief Remedy is, to beat off the first Images and Representations of it. My Text gives me occasion to speak here of the proper Remedies whereby this Sin may be cured; but because the two next Verses treat of these Receipts, I shall reserve the Discourse of such Medicines, till that Occasion.

2. If impure Thoughts are so dangerous, what then must be obscene Expressions, and filthy Jestings, and amorous Songs, and talking of things which a modest Person must blush at? And yet, how fashionable are such Discourses grown? And stiled Wit, and Salt, and ingenious Repartees! A true *Christian* is a very chaste Creature, and he counts it but a pitiful Piece of Self-Denial, to forbear the outward Acts of Adultery, or Fornication, or Sins of that Nature! His Chastity appears in his Words and Expressions too; Nay, he goes farther than that, and will not suffer a Lustful Thought to lodge in his Breast, and then, how should he allow himself Liberty in Discourses and Speeches, which intrench upon the Rules of Gravity and Modesty? He that is a stranger to this Watchfulness over his Words, may call himself a *Christian*; so we call a Picture a Man, but he had need go to School again, and learn which be the first Principles of the Oracles of God, and among these he'll find these two necessary Rules, *Ephes. iv. 29. Let no corrupt Communication proceed out of your Mouths; but that which is good to the use of Edifying, that it may minister Grace*
unto

unto the hearers; and Ephes. v. 3. *But Fornication, and all Uncleanness and Covetousness, let it not be once named among you, as becomes Saints; neither Filthiness, nor foolish Talking, nor Jesting, which are not convenient, but rather giving of Thanks.*

3. Give me leave to Suggest to you, that there is a Spiritual Adultery, which many of us, who perhaps detest Carnal Adultery, as they do Toads and Serpents, may be very guilty of. And this as well as the Sin of the Flesh, excludes from the Kingdom of Heaven, and it is no other than inordinate Love of the World, or such a Love of the World, which makes us neglect our duty to God, and to our own Souls. To this purpose St. James, Jam. iv. 4. *Ye Adulterers, and Adultresses, know ye not, that the Friendship of the World is enmity with God, and whosoever will be a Friend of the World, is an Enemy of God?* We are Married to Christ Jesus. He is our Bridegroom, and our Husband, who bought us with his Blood, and made us his own by the dearest thing imaginable, by laying down his Life for us. And there is none that knows how Love, Affection and Fidelity, and seeing one anothers Happiness are the indispensable Duties of married Persons, but must grant, that these Qualifications must necessarily be required of us, with respect to our Lord and Master, and Husband, Christ, who hath not failed to do his Part, but hath loved us, discovered his Faithfulness to us, and sought our Happiness even to Astonishment. If we make not the same returns,

turns, or pay that Love and Fidelity to the World, to the Riches and Pleasures of this Life, which are due to him, as our Husband, we become Adulterers and Adulteresses, and *the love of the Father is not in us*, 1 Joh. xi. 16.

Carnal Adultery is a crying Sin, one of the blacker sort: A Sin so heinous, that the Primitive Church, especially the *African* would give no Pardon for it, no though the Offender were never so Penitent; not admit him to their Publick Prayers, and Communion. Such dreadful Apprehensions had they of this Sin, if a Person fell into it after Baptism. Indeed it is a Violation of the most sacred Institution of God, and making a Separation there, where God hath commanded the greatest Union. It is a manifest Violation of that Faith, which was given to each other before God, and the elect Angels, and the whole Congregation. It is an Injustice attended with Profanation of God, in whose Name the Parties were joined together; there is Theft, there is Robbery in it, for one of the Parties is not only Robbed of his, or her right, but of the greatest Jewel, which is Peace, and content of Mind. It is a Profanation of the greatest Mystery of our Religion, even the Union of *Christ*, and his Church, which is represented by Marriage. And if the Conscience in the guilty Person awakes on this side the Grave, it will fill the Soul with very great Horrour, kindle Hell fire in her Bosom, as a presage of the Flames, that will shortly, (if God's Mercy doth not interpose,) be her Portion in the other World.

So heinous a Sin is Carnal Adultery. And shall we make nothing of Spiritual Adultery? Which must necessarily be as dreadful; as the Person whom we are tied to, is more excellent, the Wrong, that's done to him greater; and his Arm more powerful to revenge our Treachery. In the two standing Sacraments of the Church, we own this Marriage, and profess we are united to God in a Matrimonial Bond, that we are joined to *Christ Jesus*, and that we will be Faithful to him, beyond all Persons whatsoever: Love nothing like him, Honour and Reverence him as our Head, and suffer our selves to be guided by him. If we neglect all this, care not for so great a Person, are taken with Trifles more than with his Love, and espouse those Sins which his Soul doth hate; if we leave him in Adversity, forsake him in the time of Danger, comply with the World, and had rather part with a good Conscience, than with our Ease and Profit, and Advantages in the World? Is this Matrimonial Love? Is this being faithful to the Husband of our Souls? Is not this breaking the Bond, and dissolving the Tie, and divorcing our selves from him, who loved us, and wash'd us with his own Blood? And will not this Perfidiousness make him break out in the Language of a disconsolate Huband, *I am broken with their whorish Heart, which hath departed from me*, Ezech. vi. 9. Well; a Christian that's sensible of the Unreasonableness of such Perfidiousness, I am sure will take another Course, and submit himself heartily and willingly to

the Saviour of the Body, *Christ Jesus*, and like a loving dutiful Wife be subject to him in the fear of God, and that's the way to share in all his Benefits, even in the Benefits mention'd, *Ephes. v. 25. Husbands love your Wives; even as Christ also loved the Church.*

SERMON XXVI.

St. Matth. Ch. v. Ver. 29, 30.

And if thy right Eye offend thee, pluck it out, and cast it from thee; for it is profitable for thee, that one of thy Members should perish, and not that thy whole Body should be cast into Hell. And if thy right Hand offend thee, cut it off, and cast it from thee; for it is profitable for thee, that one of thy Members should perish, and not that thy whole Body should be cast into Hell.

THese Words relate either to all the Precepts that go before, or to the Command, or Prohibition immediately preceding; either to all the Rules, and Lessons, and Vertues, which we have already treated of, such as Humility, Meekness, Hunger and Thirst after Righteousness, purity of Heart, Peaceableness and Peace-making, exceeding the *Scribes* and *Pharisees* in Righteousness, leading an Exemplary Life, &c. or to the Law and Command which prohibits harbouring Adulterous, and impure Desires, Intentions,

tentions, and Lusts, even that whosoever looketh on a Woman to Lust after her, hath already committed Adultery with her in his Heart.

The Words of the Text are Metaphorical, or Hyperbolic to be sure, cannot be understood in a literal Sense; for though it hath happen'd so, and Providence sometimes hath so ordered it, for reasons great and weighty, that some good Men have had their right Eyes pluck'd out by others, and their right Hands cut off by Enemies, by Tyrants and Persecutors, yet to think that *Christ* would command his Followers to pluck out their own right Eye, and cut off their own right Hand, be Butchers and Executioners upon themselves, practise that Inhumanity upon their own Bodies, and go beyond the Priests of *Baal*, who only cut and hackt their Flesh, till the Blood gush'd out, this seems not at all agreeable with the design of him, who came to save that which was lost, and hath charged us not to hate our own Flesh, but to cherish it, as a Servant, that the Soul may be the better for those kind Usages shewn to her Minister.

And therefore the meaning of our Saviour must needs be this: *If thy right Eye offend thee, or if thy right Hand offend thee*, i. e. If these parts of thy Body administer occasion to Sin, if looking upon an Object, or touching it causes, or is apt to cause evil Thoughts, and impure Desires, Lusts and Designs within thee, pluck out, and cut off the Occasions of that Evil. Forbear looking that way as much

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as if thine Eyes were pluckt out, and avoid touching that Object, as much as if thy Hands were cut off; *it is better for thee, that thou enter into Life with one Eye, or maimed, or that one of thy Members should perish, i. e.* Its better for thee, that thou shouldest miss that Satisfaction, which thine Eye gave thee, and thy Hand prompted thee to, than with that Satisfaction to be cast into Hell.

So that these Words are a *Metaphor* taken from Surgeons, who in a Gangrene cut off a Limb, a Hand or Foot, or an Arm, to preserve the other Parts; and cause one to perish, that the other may continue whole and untainted.

This is at least part of our Saviours meaning here: But as I told you, the Words relate not only to unlawful Lust, shewing how that is to be cured; but to all the preceding Precepts and Vertues, and therefore something more must be intended by them; and that you may see the full extent of them, I shall comprehend it, as near as I can in these three Propositions.

I. Vertue and Watchfulness against Sin, is of that mighty Consequence, that if it were not otherwise Attainable, it were worth losing an Eye, or a Limb to get it, rather than be cast into Hell, for want of it.

II. To attain to a truly Spiritual Life, or to root up Habits of Sin, if gentler Means will not do, a *Christian* must apply himself to a more painful Discipline.

III. To avoid, or to be rid of unlawful Lust, whether Adulterous, or other impure

Desires, a *Christian* must give not the least Encouragement to the Sin by Actions that feed it, nor cherish any thing that provokes to it.

I. Vertue and Watchfulness against Sin, is of that mighty Consequence, that if it were not otherwise Attainable, it were worth losing an Eye, or a Limb to get it, rather than be cast into Hell for want of it. This is as little as we can draw from our Saviour's words; and there is none so weak, but will be able to infer from them, that so much at least is supposed, in these Expressions; *If thy right Eye, or thy right Hand offend thee, &c.*

Whatever Opinion the World may have of Vertue and Watchfulness against all sorts of Sin, God hath other thoughts of it, and judges the Attainment so necessary, that he holds it Advisable rather to endure any thing, and to run any Hazard of the Body, than go without it. And indeed all wise and good Men, who have any lively Apprehensions of the reason of the Thing, are and have been of the same Opinion; not only *Christians*, but even the *Heathen Philosophers* had an Insight into this Truth. There is a remarkable saying of *Seneca* to this Purpose. *Projice qua Cor tuum laniant, qua si aliter extrahi nequirent, Cor ipsum cum illis evellendum erat, i. e. Throw away those base Lusts, which war against thy Soul, which if there were no other way to cure it, were worth pulling out the very Heart with them.* Nay, some of these Philosophers have actually deprived themselves of the use of some considerable

able Members of their Bodies, for the study of Philosophy; and its hard if the study of Piety should not deserve as much, if it were so, that it were to be procured no other way.

Vertue and Watchfulness against Sins are of infinitely greater Value than all outward Advantages whatsoever; and since we ordinarily part with things of a lesser, for those of greater worth, seems it to you so hard a Bargain, to part with an Eye or Limb, for a greater Blessing? The loss of an Eye or Limb is nothing to the loss of a Soul? He that loses either of these, if he be Vertuous and Holy, and Watchful against Sin, may yet enter into Life; but he that is destitute of this Watchfulness, can never enter in with all his Parts about him. The loss of an Eye or Limb cannot hurt the Soul; for all that loss, the Soul may be Happy, and Blessed and Glorious, and a Favourite of Heaven; and he that loses an Eye or a Limb upon the account of Righteousness, shall have that Eye, or that Limb restored to him in a more splendid manner in the Resurrection of the Just, so that he shall be no loser by it; whereas he that is a stranger to this Watchfulness here, can never have it restored to him in the last Day, *for as the Tree falls so it shall lie*, and he that continues filthy here shall continue so till Doomsday.

Add to all this, that Hell is so tremendous a Torment, that if a Man had any lively Notions of it, he would suffer any thing rather,

the Rack, the Gibbet, the Wheel, and the Bull of *Phalaris*, than venture falling into that Misery. I grant very few Men consider what it means; which is the reason why they are frightened with it less, than with a Fire in a Chimney; but that must be ascribed altogether to the want of thinking, which we see makes Men even so brutish here, that they venture upon Actions, which lead them to the Gallows. If Hell be really such a Fire as the Gospel describes it, as undoubtedly it is, a thinking or considerate Man will dread it infinitely more, than cutting off a Limb, or pulling out of an Eye; the loss of these is Sport to that Fire.

— When *Nabash* the *Ammonite*, 1 Sam. xi. 2. proposed to the Men of *Jabesh Gilead*, that he would take them under his Protection, if he might thrust out their right Eyes, and lay the Punishment as a Reproach upon *Isreal*, the distressed Men, if no help had come from above, were content to suffer that Pain and Misery to avoid his greater Barbarities; and therefore that Man must have no Sense, no Reason, I am sure no Faith, that being in danger of being cast into Hell for want of this Watchfulness, should not chuse a lesser Evil before a greater, and prefer a momentary Pain, before one Endless and Eternal.

But blessed be God, this Watchfulness against Sin is attainable without plucking out the right Eye, and cutting off the right Hand in a literal Sense; even by great Industry, and Courage, and striving, and taking pains with our selves. And yet even this will not take with some of you. If

If this Watchfulness against Sin might be had without Labour, without Trouble, without searching and trying your ways, without Examination, without Circumspection, without fervent Prayer, without meditating on the Love of God, and the Charity of our Lord *Jefus Chrift*, its like many of you would be contented to embrace it; but these are perfect Impossibilities, and Contradictions; and when you can hope for a good Crop of Corn from a Field which you never Sowed, and look for Fire out of a Flint, when you never strike it, and expect a rich Return from the *Indies*, when you never ventured any thing: in a Word, when you can hope for Grapes of Thorns, and Figs of Thistles; then you may also hope to arrive to this holy Watchfulness without Industry.

All this I mention, to let you see what a Value you are to set upon this Watchfulness against Sin; if you do not, you will never go about it like Persons concerned; for what we do not value, we mind not. What's the Reason that so many Thousands rush into Sin, as the Horse rushes into the Battle? They watch not, they have not that *Προνοια*, as the *Greek* Fathers call it, that advertency of Mind, which is requisite, and they have it not, because they do not value it. Did you value it, you would leave no Stone unturn'd to be Masters of it, and that which ought to make you value it, is this, that God in the Text saith, it is of that Consequence, that its worth plucking out your right Eye, and cutting off your right Hand rather

rather than to continue destitute of it. But I hasten to consider the

II. Proposition, *viz.* That to attain to a truly Spiritual Life, or to root up Habits of Sin, if gentler Means will not do, a *Christian* must apply himself to a more painful Discipline. This is also very plainly intimated in the Text, which though it requires not a real plucking out of the Eyes, and cutting off the right Hand, yet the Expressions here used, do import some painful Labour, which is to be done in order to arrive to those excellent Vertues and Qualifications, which *Christ* requires in the preceding Verses.

This was very wholesome Doctrine in the Primitive Ages, when Men entertain'd very high Thoughts of a Spiritual Life; and the strange Self-Denials they practis'd, the Mortifications they used, and their acting contrary to the Humours, Customs and Fashions of the World, shews their Belief, that such a Life was not to be had without such a Discipline. In the Age we live in, Men have found another way of Mortifying themselves, an easier and softer Way, and they hope to mortify their Luxury in the midst of all the variety of Dishes, which can tempt a lawless Appetite, and they hope to mortify their Pride by allowing themselves in all the vain Dresses the World doth invent, and to mortify their Anger by resenting the least Affront or Injury that's offer'd them, and to mortify their Wantonness, by pampering their Bodies, and giving themselves all manner of Liberty, in
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Talking, Jesting, Fooling, and to mortify their Covetousness, by grasping as much as they can, and their Love to the World, by making the vaineſt Persons their Patterns; and they hope after all to arrive to purity of Heart, by ſitting in Ale-houſes and Taverns; an admirable way to a truly Spiritual Life.

St. Paul took a quite different Method, for he arrived to it by *Wearineſs*, by *Painfulneſs*, by *Watchings often*, by *Faſting often*, by *Hunger and Thirſt*, by *Cold and Nakedneſs*, 2 Cor. xi. 27. *By keeping under his Body, and bringing it into ſubjection*, 1 Cor. ix. 27. *By much Patience in Afflictions, in Diſtreſſes, in Tumults, in Impriſonments*; by *Knowledge*, by *Long-ſuffering*, by *Kindneſs*, by the *Holy Ghoſt*, by *going through good Report, and Evil Report*, by *Honour and Diſhonour*, &c. 2 Cor. vi. 4, 5, 6, 7. And though all this ſeems a painful Way, yet Love made it eaſy; Love to the Lord Jeſus, a mighty Love, a fervent Love, a Love which made him count all things *Droſs and Dung*, for the excellency of the knowledge of Chriſt.

To root up a Habit of Sin, whether of Anger or Pride, or Covetouſneſs, or Love of the World, or Intemperance, &c. is not to be done by cold Wiſhes, or a ſpiritleſs customary Devotion; and to get the Soul refined into the Life of God, a Life of Meekneſs and Patience, and Zeal and Courage, and relliſhing things Spiritual, and delighting in them; there is required great curbing of Affections and Self-Denials in things which Cuſtom, Faſhion and a ſickly Age counts Harmleſs and Innocent.

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In Persons; who are come up to a Habit of a Spiritual Life, the gentler Means, such as Prayer, Resolution, a conscientious use of the means of Grace, Meditation, Considerations, &c. may serve to maintain and preserve what, with some Labour, they have attained to. And some excellent Tempers there are, which by a secret influence of Gods spirit, are naturally inclin'd to Goodness, and in such the gentler Means may do much. But such happy Tempers are not very common. Some there are, so fickle, so inconstant, and so unsteddy, that whatever good Desires they may have, the next Temptation carries them off again, makes them relapse, and their Goodness proves a Morning Dew: And such certainly stand in need of stronger Corroboratives. And Experience teaches us, how Habits of Sin, the Effects of Custom, and the Practice of many years, mock all tender touches; and therefore, certainly here, some more painful Discipline must be used; such as Fasting, Severities, doing things irksome, troublesome, and uneasy to the Body; great self-denials in Dyet, in Apparel, in Company, in Talking, in Mirth and Recreation, large Alms, doing much good, &c.

These strangely advance a spiritual Life, especially if joined with those I call gentler Means; and as painful as this may seem to Flesh and Blood at first, the Discipline will become sweet and easie, when the Soul perceives the glorious Effects of it.

And, O! that you would but try, and venture upon this severe Course. There are Treasures

tures in it, of Joy, of Comfort, and Satisfaction; and you will find, how your Sins will abate; how your Corruptions will decrease, and your evil Inclinations will become less troublesome; you'll find how every thing will thrive under it, and what a strengthening it will be to your Faith and Hope, and Love, and Charity; and how all these Graces will grow and swell, and become large and fruitful.

Some of you, I am confident, have been striving against Lust, and other Sins; you have pray'd, you have resolved, you have meditated, &c. Yet you find, you fall into the same Sins again. Here must be some fault, either your Prayers are not fervent, or your Resolutions are not strong enough; or some more painful Discipline must be used; some Austerities, whereby the Body is subjugated, and made obedient to the Spirit; for the more the Body is pinch'd and denied in its Satisfaction, the better doth the Soul thrive. I grant these Austerities have been abused by *Pharisees*, and by some Votaries of the Church of *Rome*, into Superstition; so is Wine, and stronger Spirits, which make some drunk, but are a Cordial to others; but a modest and humble use of them cannot but be very beneficial, in order to the Life we speak of.

This is a very tempting Subject, and I could dwell upon it a little longer, but that I have something more to explain, *viz.* the

III. Proposition, that to avoid, or to be rid of unlawful Lust, of adulterous and impure Desires, Wishes, and Inclinations, a *Christian*

stian must not give the least Encouragement to the Sin, by Actions which will feed it; nor cherish any thing that will provoke to it: And of this Nature is the right Eye in the Text, and the right Hand, the one by looking, the other by touch or contrectation. These must be forborn, and totally abandoned, where they are apt to cause the least disorder in the Mind; for these are the Fewel that feed the impure Fire; and it stands to reason, the Youngster that feeds his Eyes with the charming Looks of the Minion, or Idol he adores, and puts his Hand into the Bosom of his Mistress, may as well hope to cure himself of a Fever by a Draught of cold Water, as cure himself of his Lust by that means.

Though Marriage be the great Remedy against Adultery, Fornication, and all other unlawful Lusts and Desires of the Flesh, and a Remedy prescribed by God himself; yet all Persons are not under those Circumstances, which may make a Married state fit for them.

Some, though they have not made a Vow yet are resolved, or minded to continue in a Virgin State, and to imitate the Great Apostle, and High Priest of their Profession, *Christ Jesus*, as in the Primitive Church thousands of Men and Women made themselves Eunuchs for the Kingdom of Heaven, *i. e.* that they might attend the Lord without distraction, and be able to do more good, they denied themselves not only in all sinful Lusts, but in Marriage too, not out of any ill Opinion of that State, but by way of Mortification, and voluntary

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Abstinence; and because they thought a single Life spent in the Service of God, and in doing good, a higher degree of *Christian* Perfection.

Others are under the Yoak of Service, and tyed by the Law of the Land, and their own Indentures, and Oaths and Promises not to Marry, before the time of their Service be ended: Others there are, whom poverty, and want of means to maintain a Family, keeps from entring into that Condition; and others for other Reasons, are obliged to abstain from it. Now all such Persons may justly be supposed to be liable to Temptations of unlawful Lusts, and therefore such may stand in need of Counsel, and Advice, how to keep themselves Chast, and Innocent, from the Garment spotted by the Flesh. Nay, there is Chastity to be observed in a Married State. Adulterous Lusts and Desires are dangerous, as the fall of a Thunderbolt, and burn into the next thermost Hell. And such also fall under the direction of Preservatives.

These Preservatives are various, and they either regard the Mind, or the Actions. As they have respect to the Mind, Consideration, I mean that which is serious, and attentive, must be used; and a *Christian* must take time to ponder and reflect, how great, how dreadful, how heinous, how dangerous the Sins of Adultery, Fornication, Lasciviousness, and Uncleanness are; for they exclude from the Kingdom of Heaven, alienate the Love and Favour of God from the Offender, and kindle his

his Everlasting Wrath and Indignation, *Gala.* v. 19, 20, 21. Besides, he that commits Fornication, Sins against his own Body, he is injurious to that Body which was purchased and bought for *Christ's* Service; makes a *Beth-aven*, a House of Impiety, of that which should be a *Bethel*, a House of God, and violates the Sanctity of that Tabernacle, which was dedicated to the Worship of him who is of purer Eyes than to behold iniquity, makes the Members of *Christ*, the Members of a Harlot, and profanes the Temple of the Holy Ghost, for so his Body is, and for that use it was intended, as we see, *1 Cor.* vi. 17, 18. Not to mention, how by these Sins of Impurity, the Understanding is darken'd, the Light of God is obscured, and the Life of Religion turn'd out of doors; how Adultery was punish'd with Death by the Law of *Moses*, as much as Murder; which shews the heinousness of the Offence, and what Judgments have been inflicted on Men, and Nations, from time to time, even in this present Life, as fore-runners of greater Plagues in another World; such Topics the Understanding must fix upon; and except this be done, all other Means and Preservatives will be in vain; for if these Sins be shun'd, it must be upon rational Grounds; and its impossible the dread of these Sins should be Rational, except the Mind takes these Arguments into Consideration.

The things that are to be done, in order to be rid of these unlawful and forbidden Lusts, and join'd with these Considerations, are these following:

1. We

1. We know, how much *Idleness*, and want of Employment, helps to feed these Lusts; and therefore this must be watch'd against; it was this which precipitated the Inhabitants of *Sodom* into those Lusts, which procured their Ruin and Destruction. *Ezech. xvi. 49.*

2. *Drunkennes* and *Gluttony*, and Pampering the Body, do manifestly administer Fuel to the Flame, and therefore these must be renounced, *Jer. v. 7.*

3. Whatsoever feeds the Sin, must be removed; and of this Nature are, *immodest*, and *obscene Discourses*, and *Communications*, against which the Ears must be stopt, or the Company avoided, where such Discourses are familiar and frequent, *Eph. v. 3, 4.* Add to all this, reading obscene Books, and Phamphlets; Books of Love Tricks, such as *Romances*, Plays, and other Fooleries, which are nothing but Incentives to Lust; and so are your promiscuous Dancings and Revelings after luxurious Meals; and seeing of Stage-plays, where these Lusts are represented in taking shapes, and all other things, which the Enemy of Mankind hath invented to drown Men in Perdition. But after all, our Saviour's Rule in the Text, must be conscientiously observed: Look off from the Object that is apt to shoot an Evil Desire into your Minds, or hath done it several times, when your Eyes have taken Liberty to behold such things. Avoid the sight of them, as you would do the Eyes of a *Basilisk*: Let your Eyes be as usefess that way, as if they were pluck't out, as if you had none; as if you were blind,

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and could not see. Do not touch, do not handle, do not lay your Hands upon those parts which are apt to raise the Spirit of Unclean-ness in you. Let your Hands be useleſs to you in that point, as if they were cut off. The ſame may be ſaid of your Feet. Come not near the Houſe of the Perſon, who is apt to bewitch your Souls ; keep out of her Company that's like to delude you, and may give occaſion to dangerous Thoughts and Deſires. Let your Feet be as uſeleſs to you in going to ſuch Places as if they were cut off. If after all this, the Luſt be ſtubborn, and will not yield to the Obedience of *Chriſt*, the antient Severities and Auſterities, I mentioned in the preceding Proposition, muſt be made uſe of; and the Body muſt be uſed courſely, not only in Diet, but in Cloaths, and Apparel, and by other Punishments voluntarily inflicted upon your ſelves, whereof I could give you ſuch Inſtances out of Antiquity, as would poſſibly exceed your Belief, though I doubt not, but there is Truth in them. And when the Fewel is withdrawn, the Fire will go out.

St. Chryſoſtom takes notice, that our Saviour's Command here, is eaſie. It would have been more ſevere, if ſo be he had commanded us to ſtand near the Fire, and take heed we be not ſinged, or burnt ; to keep Company with incentives to Luſt, and yet to feel no diſorderly Motions in the Soul. Indeed, what he enjoins here, is ſo far from being unreaſonable, that he commands nothing but what the Light of Nature hath taught the very Heathens to obſerve.

And,

And if after all, the danger of being cast into Hell, can make no Impressions upon us, or make us forbear what our Master saith, will be the undoing of us, most certainly we know not what that Punishment is, and will not know it, nor indeed do we believe it. I confess, I would have you do what *Christ* says is necessary, upon a Principle of Love; but if your Tempers are so stubborn, that Love cannot melt you into a chearful Compliance with your Masters Will, you have reason to fright your selves with the danger of that Fire which shall never be quenched.

In a word, do any thing to save your selves from this untoward Generation. Sins as dear as the right Eye, as precious as the right Hand, will fall and die, if they be brought to feel that Fire; I mean, by attentive Thinking, and Meditation. I doubt not, but the unhappy Creatures, to whose share the future Torment falls, wish, and will wish, that they had pluckt out their right Eye, and cut off their right Hand, rather than have come into that place of Torment. Oh! how they will curse the Day, the Time, the Place, when and where they committed their Lewdness and Impurities; nay, the Eye that deceived them into those Lusts; and the Hand that tempted them to Sin; and would God be so kind, as to free them from the Prison they groan in, upon condition that they should pluck out both their Eyes, and cut off both their Hands, they would thank him for the Favour, and think their Judge

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wonderfully Merciful, to agree to such soft and
reasonable Terms.

The present Satisfaction is the Lime-twigg, that keeps People under the power of Sin, and Satan. But were that Hell, we speak of, set out in its native Colours, and compared with that Satisfaction, you would scorn it, as much as you do the most loathsome Animals. To enjoy the present Satisfaction of Sin, and yet to escape Hell, are things inconsistent, and in Divinity impossible; therefore that Satisfaction must be quitted; or if Death should arrest you in that Satisfaction, the other will certainly take place: All which makes our Saviour's Discourse here very rational and equitable; *if thy right Eye offend thee, pluck it out, &c.*

SER.

SERMON XXVII.

St. Matth. Ch. v. Ver. 31 32.

It hath been said, whosoever shall put away his Wife, let him give her a Writing of Divorcement. But I say unto you, that whosoever shall put away his Wife, saving for the cause of Fornication, causes her to commit Adultery; and whosoever Marries her that is Divorced, commits Adultery.

WHEN Christ, the Son of Righteousness appeared in this Vale of Misery, the World was so corrupt, that the attempt to reform, &c. would have frightened the wisest, the most valiant, any Society of Men, any Man, but him, who had Omnipotence to back him.

To say nothing of the Heathen Nations, who had been suffered to walk in their own ways, and therefore no wonder if they sunk into all the dreadful Vices mentioned, *Rom. i.* The Jews, to whom pertained the Adoption, and the Glory, and the Covenant, and the Promises, and the giving of the Law, whose were the Fathers, and of whom Christ came after the

Flesh ; and of whom one would have expected a Purity answerable to their Mercies and Encouragement : These though they had made a shift to renounce *Idolatry*, yet had so vitiated and polluted all the Articles of Divinity, and all the Rules of Morality, that it required a strength greater than that of *Hercules*, to purge that *Augean Stable*. You have seen already their various Violations of things Sacred, and Divine ; and the ill favoured Interpretations they put upon the Law against Murder, and the other against Adultery. The same Liberty, or Licentiousness they practised or made use of in the matter of Divorces, or putting away their Wives ; and in doing so they grounded themselves upon a Text of the Law of *Moses*, Deut. xxiv. 1, 2. Where *Moses* permits Men in certain cases to separate themselves from their Wives ; and in order thereunto, to give them כריתות *a Bill to certify that Separation*, or a Writing of Divorcement ; which Text our Saviour alledges, and admits of, doth not deny that such a thing was permitted under the Law, but partly to shew, that they wilfully deprived and perverted the Sense and Design of that Law ; and partly to intimate, that his Doctrine, and the Blessings which came along with it, required greater Strictness and Severity of Life. He proves, that the Lawfulness of Divorcements, which they extended to Causes and Cases of their own making, was to be restrained only to Fornication, and Adultery ; and whoever took greater Liberty in Divorcing himself, would

would involve himself in very great Evils, and Mischiefs. *It hath been said, Whosoever shall put away his Wife, let him give her a Writing of Divorcement. But I say unto you, that whosoever shall put away his Wife, saving in the case of Fornication, causes her to commit Adultery; and whosoever Marries her which is Divorced, commits Adultery.*

This is no Contradiction to the Law of *Moses*, but raising an imperfect into a more perfect Law, which became him who was the end of the Law; for the Law made nothing perfect, but the bringing in of a better hope did.

To treat of these Words to your Edification, I shall

I. Enquire into the Nature of the Law of *Moses*, concerning Divorcements.

II. Why *Christ* forbids, and abolishes Divorcements in the *Jewish* Sense.

III. Why Fornication, or Adultery is a just Cause of Divorcement; and whether that be the sole and only cause, that justifies such a Separation.

IV. Whether the Woman hath an equal Right; and in case of the Husband's Adultery, may Divorce her self from her Husband, as well as as the Husband from the Wife, in case the fault lies in her.

V. Whether this Divorcement may be made by their own Authority, without the Advice and order of the Magistrate.

VI. Whether after such a Divorce, the innocent Party, or both Parties may Marry again,

VII. How he that puts away his Wife, causes her to commit Adultery.

VIII. How he that Marries her that's put away, commits Adultery.

And when all these Particulars are explained, I shall close up the Discourse with suitable Directions, how such Divorces, and all Desires after them, may be prevented.

I. Let's enquire into the Nature of the Law of *Moses* concerning these Divorcements. *It hath been said*, saith our Saviour, *Whosoever shall put away his Wife, let him give her a Writing of Divorcement*. I doubt not, but the *Scribes* and *Pharisees* said so, to justify their unlawful Divorcements; and what they said, it's like, was with respect to this Law of *Moses*; our Saviour in all probability, speak it with respect to both. This Law concerning Divorcements, you have, *Deut. xxiv. 1, 2.* where we read, *When a Man hath taken a Wife, and Married her, and it come to pass that she find no Favour in his Eyes, because he hath found some Uncleanneſs in her; then let him write her a Bill of Divorcement, and give it in her Hand, and send her out of his House; and when she is departed out of his House, she may go and be another Mans Wife.* Concerning which Law, I observe these following Particulars.

1. That *Moses* did not, for the ease of his People, invent this Law of his own Head, which seems to have been the Opinion of *Origen*, and *St. Ambrose*; for though the *Pharisees*, treating of this very point, asked our Great Master, *Why did Moses Command us to give a*
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Writing of Divorcement, Matth. xix. 7. Yet since all the Scripture of the Old Testament is of *Divine Inspiration*, 2 Tim. iii. 16. of which Old Testament this Law is part, it is evident that *Moses* being the great Minister of God, by whom he deliver'd his Oracles, and faithful in all his House; did and could, and would deliver nothing, as a standing Law for the *Jewish Church*, but what God gave him order for, or as he was *moved by the Holy Ghost*, as St. Peter saith of all the Writers of the Old Testament, 2 Pet. i. 21. And therefore whenever *Moses* is Quoted in the New Testament, the meaning is, *God speaking by Moses*, and consequently this Law is derived from God.

2. We need not wonder that God should give such a Law concerning Divorces, or make them in some cases Lawful; for as he is the Author of Matrimony, so he might have enlarged the Bounds of it, if he had pleased. And therefore that he relaxed the Law and Constitution of it in the Cases of *Polygamy* and *Divorce* to the *Jewish People*, can be no Disparagement to his Holiness. For since it was in his Power to institute the State of Matrimony, no doubt he had also Power in certain Cases, and for certain Reasons, to dispense with the Strictness of it, this being none of the fixed and eternal Laws, which are in their own nature Immutable and Unchangeable, but depended upon the Lawgiver's Will and Pleasure, not to mention that this was to teach all wise Governours to suit their
Laws

Laws as far as they can do it with safety, to the Temper of their People.

3. The course of Divorce allow'd of in the Law, is said to be this, *if the Wife find no favour in her Husbands Eyes, because he hath found some Uncleanneſs in her*; where, by Uncleanneſs cannot be meant Fornication and Adultery; for *the Adultereſs was to be ſtoned to Death*, Deut. xxii. 22. compared with Job viii. Nay, if the Husband did upon good Grounds, but ſuſpect his Wife guilty of Adultery, he had his remedy, by obliging her to *drink the Waters of Jealouſy*, Numb. v. 27. And therefore by this Uncleanneſs ſome underſtand either the *Leproſy*, or the Vice of *Drunkenneſs* or *Witchcraft*, or a very quarrelſome Temper, or ſome other *incorrigible Vice*; but the Words in the Original are *ערוהרבר* which is as ſome great immodesty in Words or Actions; a Sin leſs than Adultery and Fornication; yet which (not ſtopt,) might lead to the greater Sins. And in this caſe God gave them leave to diſmiſs their Wives. But ſuch was the vitious humor of that Nation, that in progreſs of time, ſheltring themſelves under this Command, they turned off their Wives for trivial Offences, and upon very ſlight Occaſions; I would name ſome of them, but that they are too Ridiculous to be mention'd. And therefore the *Phariſees*, coming to our Saviour about this Queſtion, ask him, *Is it lawful for a Man to put away his Wife for every Cauſe?* this was the common Practice, though the better and the wiſer Men doubted of it.

4. What-

4. Whateyer liberty this Law gave, the Divorcement was permitted rather than commanded, and the Words infer an Impunity rather than a Duty. A Jew was not bound to put away his Wife, by vertue of this Law; but was Connived at, if he did it, and secured against Punishment from the Magistrate. This Law did not hinder the Man from dwelling with his Wife, notwithstanding the Faults I have mentioned; but if he would not live with her, he was to give her a *Writing of Divorcement*,

5. This *Writing of Divorcement* was a formal Dismission of the Wife under the Husband's Hand and Seal; or a full Discharge from the Husband's Power and Authority, and Jurisdiction and Obligation to provide for her, or to take care of her; and if we may believe the *Jews*, the Form of it was this.

"I such a One, the Son of such a One, such
"a Day of the Week, such a Day of the
"Month, such a Year after the Creation of
"the World, in such a Place, or City or
"Town, have freely, voluntarily, and with-
"out Compulsion dismissed, rejected, and re-
"pudiated such a Person, the Daughter of
"such a One, and have given a Bill of Di-
"vorcement into her Hand, and given her
"Leave and Power, and accordingly she hath
"leave to Marry with whom she thinks fit ac-
"cording to the Constitution of *Moses*, and
"the Children of *Israel*.

The reason of giving this Bill of Divorcement in *St. Austin's Opinion*, was

1. That

1. That in the Writing of this Bill, the Husband's Anger might have time to cool, and he consider what a Rashness it was to put her away, and whether there was sufficient cause for this Severity.

2. That things might be done according to Law, and that he who had put away his Wife, might not afterward be able to demand her again.

3. That she might be empower'd to Marry again; for which Power she had this Bill, or Certificate to shew; a Bill which declared that she was fully discharged from her former Husband.

So much I thought fit to observe concerning this Law of *Moses*.

But let's go on, and

II. Enquire, why our Saviour did forbid and abolish these Divorcements in the Jewish Sense. *But I say unto you, that whosoever shall put away his Wife, &c.*

The Reasons are these following.

1. These Divorces of the *Jews* were arbitrary, Effects of a brutish, lawless Will, meer actions of Revenge; and though *Moses* had given them leave to put away their Wives, for less Causes, than Fornication or Adultery, yet they were such Causes, as were arguments of great Turpitude and Scandal, and made the Man not only very uneasy, but prejudiced him in his lawful Calling, and reflected upon his Prudence and Reputation. But the *Jews* ventured to do it for any Cause whatsoever, and of that Cause, themselves would be Judges, and

and therefore *Christ* had reason to Abolish that Custom.

2. What liberty God gave them by *Moses*, as to these Divorcements, it was not so much out of any respect to the intrinsic Goodness of the Thing, as to prevent greater Evils. And therefore our Saviour in plains Terms tells the *Jews*, *Matth. xix. 8. Moses for the hardness of your Hearts suffered you to put away your Wives.* The *Jews* were a surly, humorsome, and ill-natur'd sort of People, and to prevent their Murthering, Poisoning, Beating, or abusing their Wives, he suffered these Divorcements; and that's it, that all wise Lawgivers ordinarily do, to prevent a greater, they connive at a lesser Evil, the Peace and Nature of the Government requiring so much. Even among our selves, and in the Land we live in, several things are permitted, which Authority doth not much approve of. And accordingly these Divorces having been permitted during the *Jewish Oeconomy*, when the People and the Dispensation were weak, it was necessary, when that *Oeconomy* came to cease, those Divorces should cease too.

3. *Christ* came to reduce all, and Matrimony especially to the first Institution; And therefore could do no less than Abolish all, that contradicted the Primitive Rule. And accordingly he tells the *Pharisees*, *Matt. xix. 4, 8. Moses for the hardness of your Hearts suffered you to put away your Wives, but from the beginning, it was not so. Have ye not read, that he which made them in the beginning, made them Male*

Male and Female, and said, for this cause shall a Man leave Father and Mother, and cleave to his Wife ? wherefore they are no more twain, but one Flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let no Man put asunder ; The Divorces which were practised among the *Jews* and other Nations, the *Persians*, the *Greeks*, the *Romans* ; though as to the *Romans*, it must be confessed it came in very late among them, for though there was no Law against Divorcing, yet for 520 Years, there was no Example of Divorce among them ; so undecent did they take it to be ; and therefore there are very few Writers, but what condemn *Cicero* for putting away his Wife *Terentia*, with whom he had lived many Years. These Divorces, I say practised by the *Jewish* and other Nations, were great Violations of the Primitive Institution of Marriage, and of the Innocence and Perfection of *Paradise*. *Christ's* Province being to reintroduce that Perfection and Innocence, and to establish it among his Followers, could do no less than Abolish the abuses which corrupt Nature, and a more corrupt Commonwealth had brought in : And this very Argument makes *Polygamy*, or having more Wives than one Sinful, because it contradicts the Primitive Institution, which God indeed relaxed for a certain Time during the Infancy of the Church, but *Christ* justly reduced to it's former Bounds and Limits under the Gospel, which affords greater Helps and Motives to observe those Bounds, and shews a better way how Men may be cured of the Hardness of

of their Hearts, than any Discipline whatsoever.

And yet even under the Gospel, there is something that makes a Divorce lawful, and that is, if one of the Married Parties proves guilty of *Adultery*; which leads me to the

III. Enquiry, Why *Adultery* or *Fornication* is a just Cause of Divorce, and whether this be the sole Cause, that justifies such a Separation. *But I say unto you, that whosoever shall put away his Wife, saving in the case of Fornication.* And though St. *Luke*, and St. *Mark*, do not mention this Exception, yet we know, that one *Evangelist* must be explained by the other. The reason that makes Divorcement in case of *Adultery* lawful, is this, because by *Adultery*, the Bond of Matrimony is broken: What some say, that the right, or Bond of Cohabitation is broken, but not the Bond of Matrimony, seems to be of no weight; for the Words of *Christ* are very Express and Emphatical, *Whosoever shall put away his Wife, Παρεκτός λόγου πορνείας, saving in the Cause of Fornication.* And therefore certainly in Case of *Fornication*, it is lawful to put her away, and could not be lawful in that Sense the *Jews* understood *Christ* in, i. e. so as to be permitted to Marry again, except the Bond of Matrimony had been broke by the *Fornication*; for as by Matrimony Man and Wife are one Flesh, so by *Fornication*, they are no more one, but the Person, who commits Lewdness, becomes one Flesh with another; and though it is said, that *what God hath joined together, let no Man put asunder*, Matth.

xix. 6. And though we read, *that a Woman which hath a Husband, is bound by the Law to her Husband, so long as he lives*; yet this is to be understood of married Persons, who live in conjugal Chastity; and while this is done, to be sure the Bond is not dissolved.

2. *Christ* having restrained the Lawfulness of such Divorcements to Fornication and Adultery, it cannot be safe to invent more Causes. I will not deny, but there are Sins, that in Heinousness may amount to the Sin of Adultery, yet it must be dangerous to depart from the express Words of our Saviour. The Civil Law, or rather some *Christian* Emperours in the Civil Law allow of other Causes, such as "if the Wife be guilty of Witchcraft, or Murther, or of Men-stealing, or of Violation of Sepulchers, or of Sacrilege, or if she harbour Thieves and Robbers, or if she goes to Feasts where lewd and wicked Persons meet, or to Stage-plays, and publick Shows, or lies out of the Husbands House at Night against his Will, and without his Knowledge, if she practise Treason secretly against the State, or if she treats of Marriage with another Man, while her Husband is alive, or if she lay violent Hands on her Husband, &c.

Though all these are Crimes which should not be so much as named among *Christians*; yet since *Christ* hath excepted no Case, but that of *Adultery*, or *Fornication*, that *Christian* walks most safely, that keeps to the Letter of the Text. I grant, there may be other Causes,

ses, which may justify a Man and his Wife's living asunder; but I dare not say, that by any other Sins, the Bond of Matrimony is dissolved; because our Saviour is silent.

IV. Whether the Woman hath an equal Right, and may Divorce her self from her Husband, in case he is guilty of *Adultery*, as well as the Husband from her, if she be guilty.

1. Among the *Jews* this was not Customary or Lawful. The Husband might put away his Wife, but the Wife could not put away the Husband, which is the reason why *Josephus* takes notice of it, as a great piece of Insolence, that *Salome a Jewess* separated her self from her Husband *Costabar*. But among the *Romans*, the Wife had an equal Liberty. And in the Case before us, this seems to be very Rational. For

2. If the Bond of Matrimony be dissolved by the Adultery of the Husband, as well as it is by the Adultery of the Wife, the Woman in point of Conscience must be at liberty to Divorce her self from her Husband, as well as the Husband, to separate himself from her, if she be guilty. There is a Parity of reason, which I know is not to be stretcht too far; but here is just Ground for it. And though as to the Government of the Family, the Scripture gives the Man Pre-eminence, and a Power, Authority, and Jurisdiction over the Wife, yet as to the obligations to be true and faithful to one another, the Apostle makes them equal, 1 Cor. vii. 4. And in the case of Desertion, whereof I shall speak in the Sequel,

quel, it's plain St. Paul gives the Woman an equal Privilege, 1 Cor. vii. 15.

And indeed, if the Wife have not an equal Right, it must follow, that the Husband's *Adultery* is a less Sin, than that of the Wife, which I suppose no wise Man will grant. To this purpose it is, that *Justin Martyr* commands a *Christian* Woman, who having a Husband, that lived in open *Adultery*, took the benefit of the *Roman Law*, and went from him, i. e. divorced her self from him; and the reason why she did so, was that she might not become a partaker of his Sin; yet it's added, that she did not do it, till several Means had been tried to reclaim him from his Impiety.

Indeed this is very necessary on both sides, that where it is, that one of the Parties is guilty of *Adultery*, all reasonable means ought to be tried, to convert the Sinner, him, or her, from the Errours of their Ways, before the Separation; the rather because this Separation ought not to be made in Anger and Revenge; but with Prudence and Charity; and though a Divorce in this case be lawful, yet it is not so necessary that the Innocent Party is forbid to be reconciled to the Guilty, if the Guilty do unfeignedly repent; and though its granted the Bond of Matrimony is dissolved, i. e. the Right and the Obligation to live together like Man and Wife be dissolved, yet I hope a Man or Woman may decede from their Right, or give it up when a greater Good is to be promoted by it.

I know some Divines both Antient and Modern have been, and are of Opinion that there is an absolute necessity for a Divorce in such Cases; the Council of *Eliberis* particularly hath a *Canon*, "That if a Clergy-man's Wife commit Fornication, and her Husband doth not presently put her away, he shall be denied the communion all his Days, even upon his Death-Bed.

But since God receives the worst of Sinners upon their true Repentance, it's hard to think it should be a Crime in married Persons, after such a Breach to forgive one another, and to return to one another, upon a true Reformation; for though it be permitted them to separate, if they will; yet they are not hindred from exercising Charity one toward another. And if God is reconciled to the vilest Wretches upon their serious Return, and takes them into his Bosom should not we do so after the greatest Provocations, if true Repentance appears in the Person, that hath committed Folly; we *that are to be Followers of God*, Eph. v. 1.

V. Whether these Divorces may be made by private Authority, without having recourse to our Governours.

1. Among the *Jews*, it's certain it was not always necessary to make use of the Magistrates Assistance; but the Husband was Judge in his own Cause, and might give the Wife a Bill of Divorcement without making his Superiours acquainted with it; for there is nothing said

Of it in the Law of *Moses*; though it is not to be doubted but sometimes it was done before competent Judges; especially, where there was a dispute about repaying of the Dowry, or part of the Goods, the Wife had brought to her Husband, for in such Divorcements the *Jews* tell us that part of the Dowry, or the whole was repaid, and if so, this alone was enough to prevent the many Divorces which one may believe, would otherwise have been in that Nation among a People *projecta libidinis*, as *Tacitus* calls them, *inclined to Wantonness and Lasciviousness*.

2. We *Christians* serving the God of Order, and it being a Rule of our Religion, that all things ought to be done Decently and in Order, it must follow, that such Divorces, how just soever, must not be the meer Effects of our Will and Pleasure, but so managed that others may not be Scandaliz'd by our Actions; And that's but agreeable to the general Rule of the Apostle, *that we are to provide things honest in the sight of all Men*, Rom. xxii. And consequently such Divorcements are not to be made without the Consent and Approbation of Publick Authority, for without this infinite Confusions would arise, and wicked Men might abuse this Liberty into the greatest Licentiousness. And as they that Marry, ought to Marry in the Lord, with the Approbation and Benediction of the Minister of God, so it's Fit, that they who in the case of Adultery, after that all Attempts of reforming the guilty Party prove ineffectual, separate and are Divorced

Divorced one from the other; I say it's fit, it should be done before Persons, Wise, Judicious, and in Power, that they may judge of the Justice of the Divorce, be satisfied in the Reasons of it, and be able to give a good Account of it to others, and that the Doctrine of our Saviour, or our Religion be not Blasphemed or evil spoken of. And when among the *Athenians*, the Woman, who had a mind to be Divorced from her Husband, was obliged to appear in Person before the Magistrates, and cite the Husband before them, we that are *Christians* ought not to be Inferiour to them in Prudence and Discretion.

VI. Whether after such Divorcements the innocent Party, or both Parties may Marry again.

Concerning this Question, there have been three Opinions for many Ages. Some have thought it is unlawful for either Party to marry again. Some that it is lawful for the Innocent, others, that it is lawful for both Parties to re-enter into the State of Matrimony. It was look'd upon by many *Christians* as lawful to Marry again after Divorces. In

Tertullian's Time, *Origen* affirms, *Vid. Grot. in loc.* it was permitted by some Bishops in his Days. It was somewhat late indeed, before the Councils of *Eliberis*, *Arles*, *Orleans*, and *Venice*, gave way to it; but till the Council of *Trent* there was no considerable body of Men who determin'd against it. The *Greek Church* at this Day, consents to the Practice of it.

I am sensible, that all those who are of Opinion, that by Adultery the Bond of Matrimony is not dissolved, will be against either Parties Marrying again after such a publick Separation; and I cannot but say, that is better, and an argument of Self-Denial, Mortification, Continnence, and true Repentance, especially for the guilty Party to abstain not only from all unlawful Lusts, but from Marriage too, and spend the remainder of his Life in Afflicting his Soul for his Scandalous Offences, if perhaps he may escape the Damnation of Hell: Nor would it be less acceptable to God, for the innocent Party to decede from her, or his Right, and to Consecrate themselves intirely to God, and his Service. But if the Question be whether in point of Conscience, it be not lawful to Marry again, I cannot but say, that it is, for any thing, I yet see to the contrary, Especially,

1. For the innocent Party, for this is but the necessary Consequence of what I asserted before, that by *Adultery* the Bond of Matrimony was dissolved; and if dissolved, and a lawful Divorce follow thereupon, the innocent Party at least, must be supposed to be at liberty to Marry again; for though *Christ* makes no expresse mention of it, yet since it's certain, he allows of a Divorce in case of Adultery or Fornication, and doth not change the notion of Divorce, from what the *Jews* understood by it, it must necessarily follow, that by it we are to understand such a Divorce, as was usual in those Days, or in the Days

Days of *Moses*, with the necessary Circumstances and Consequences of it. Now a lawful Divorce among the *Jews* included, or imported liberty to Marry again, as is evident from the Law of *Moses*, Deut. xxiv. 1, 2. which I explained in the Premises, where it is expressly said, *that the Woman sent out of the House of her Husband, with a Writing of Divorcement, may Marry another Man.* Nor is it just, the Guiltless should suffer for the Guilty; if the Guilty have been the cause of this misfortune, why should the Innocent be punished for it? It's true our Saviour suffered, *the just for the unjust*, and we are to imitate him in the greatest instances of his Charity; but *Christ's* Suffering, *the just for the unjust* was a thing of another Nature, very different from the Case before us, and therefore is not applicable to it: Besides, *Christ's* Suffering, the Innocent for the Guilty was for an universal Good, and in this Case a *Christian* may, and ought to follow him, and suffer the same Way, if it may be for the Good of Mankind; but this cannot be said of a forbearance to Marry after Divorce; especially, if there be danger of burning, as the Apostle calls it, 1 Cor. vii. 9. In this Case the Forbearance seems rather to tend to the hurt and scandal of the Church, than to the Glory or Benefit of it.

Fabiola, a Person of Quality at *Rome*, a Lady of noble Extraction, being young Married to a Gallant of the Times, who proving Vicious, and living in *Adultery*, by the persuasion

suasion of her Friends, she sends him a Bill of Separation, and Divorces her self from him ; and soon after Marries another. The Second Husband dying, and it being her Fortune to converse with some Persons, who had a very mean Opinion of second Marriages , and took occasion to aggravate to her the Crime of Marrying again, while her first, though Adulterous Husband was living, frightened with the danger they told her she was in, she doth Publick Penance for it in the publick Church ; in the Commendation of which, *St. Jerom* is very Copious and Rhetorical ; and according to his Account, none that ever underwent a publick Penance for Adultery, used greater Rigor and Severity, upon themselves, than she.

But though I am a great admirer of the due Rigours and Severities in Matters of Religion, yet to make a Sin of that which the Gospel hath made none, and to do Penance for that which the Scripture hath not declared to be against the Will of God, provided there were no other Sins mingled with the Action, seems to be part of that *overmuch Righteousness* which *Solomon* finds fault with, *Eccles. vii. 16.* *St. Jerom* himself, who with great Flourishes relates the Story, though he was no great Friend to second Marriages, yet in this case of *Fabiola*, dares not say, that she ought to have left her second Husband, after she was divorced from her first, because of his notorious Adulteries ; and though he doth not approve of her second Marriage, yet he doth in some measure excuse

it,

it, because there was some colour for venturing upon it from the Gospel.

2. In the case of Desertion, the Apostle gives the Party deserted, leave to marry again, 1 Cor. vii. 15. *But if the Unbelieving depart, let him depart; a Brother, or a Sister is not under Bondage in such Cases.* The Dispute was, whether a Woman, that was a *Christian*, having a Husband who was a *Heathen*, or Infidel might live with him, if she could not convert him? The Apostle answers, v. 10, 11. *Let not the Wife depart from her Husband; but and if she depart, because of some heats betwixt them, let her remain unmarried, or be reconciled to her Husband;* so far the Apostle gives his Advice, if Quarrels did arise betwixt the unbelieving Husband, and the believing Wife, about Religion, if he did abuse, or beat her, or led her an unquiet Life; but then if the difference rose higher, and the Husband should totally forsake her; suppose go into another Country, and take no farther care of her, but leave her to shift for her self; in that case saith St. Paul, *a Brother or a Sister is not under Bondage*, i. e. as very many Interpreters explain it, she is not under an Obligation to continue unmarried, or she may marry again: Upon this saying of St. Paul, it was, that the *Helvetian* Divines grounded their Verdict in the case of the Marquis *Galeacis Caraccioli*, whom they advised to marry again, when his Wife had deserted him; or which is all one, would not return to him, after frequent Intreaties to that purpose. And its possible, this Conclusion of the Apostle might give occasion to

Constantin

Constantine to enact a Law, That if a Woman, after her Husband was gone from her, did not hear of him in four years, she might Marry again. To which purpose we have a Law of our own, 1. Jac. I. *That if a Man or Woman being gone beyond the Seas, and one do not hear from the other in seven Years, it shall be lawful for the Party that hears nothing of the other, to proceed to another Marriage.*

The Reason why I urge this Case of Desertion, is this; If it be lawful for a Woman deserted by her Husband, or for a Man deserted by his Wife, upon the account of Religion, though there be no Adultery in the Case, to Marry again; much more must it be lawful for Persons, who part upon the account of Adultery, and are lawfully divorced, at least for the innocent Party, to Marry again, because Desertion is a less Crime than Adultery. Though *Hermes*, an antient Writer saith, that *Desertion is equal to Adultery*; yet whatever likeness there may be, there appears greater guilt in Adultery, than in the other; the rather, because the Bond of Matrimony is more directly broke in this, than in the other.

It's true, the Constitution of our Church is, that if Persons be divorced, after Adultery, the respective Parties are obliged to enter into Bond, before they are actually divorced, that neither of them shall Marry again, while the other lives; but the reason of that is, because our Church fears the dangerous Consequences of such Divorces, in respect of the Collusion that may be betwixt the two Parties, who may
be

be alike weary one of the other ; and so a Gap might be open'd to great Licentiousness : So that I suppose, our Church would not be against the innocent Party's Marrying again, if such Evils might be easily prevented.

3. The greatest difficulty is about the Party guilty of Adultery, and who gives occasion to the Divorce, whether they may Marry again. And here, if the same Law were in use among us, which *Moses* gave the *Jews*, that the *Adulterer, or the Adulteress* should be put to Death, or stoned : And were that Law duely executed by the Magistrates, there would be no occasion for such Questions as these. However, the Bond of Marriage be dissolved by the Adultery, as we proved before, we cannot say that it is absolutely unlawful, even for the guilty, after a lawful Divorce, to Marry again ; the Notion of Divorce among the *Jews*, which we do not find our Saviour Reverse, importing so much. There may be some Reasons, which may make it lawful. But then,

1st. As the Divorce is not to be made without the Knowledge and Approbation, or Consent of our Superiors, and Governors, whether Spiritual or Temporal ; so, if a Divorce be obtained, and made, the guilty ought not to marry again, till he shews sufficient Reasons to the same Governors, which may make it necessary ; for Men are apt to be very partial in their own Cause.

2^{ly}. Before Leave or Permission be given him, he ought to be exhorted, and admonished by those, to whom that part belongs, to a deep Au-

Humiliation for his scandalous Sin; and that Humiliation, and change of Life, and Exemplary Conversation, ought first to appear, and long Practice become habitual, before Permission be given; that the Church of God, which hath been scandaliz'd, may receive some Satisfaction,

3/y. The guilty Party, if he will act Conscientiously, before he ever thinks of Marrying again, ought

1. Earnestly to endeavour to prevent a Divorce, by reconciling himself to the Innocent, by asking Pardon of the Party wrong'd, and by sincere and unfeigned Promises of a future, steady, and invincible Chastity.

2. If the Innocent Party, for weighty Reasons, sues out a Divorce, and obtains it, the guilty ought, by Mortification and Prayer, and an humble Penitent Life, labour after the Gift of Continence; and spare no Cost, no Hardship to attain to it; and thus punish himself for his great and crying Sins, that he may be deliver'd from the Wrath to come. But,

3. If after all convenient Ways, and Methods, and Tryals used, he cannot arrive to it, this seems to be the only Case, that may make his marrying again lawful, according to the general Rule of the Apostle, *It's better to Marry than to burn*, 1 Cor. vii. 9.

VII. *How he that puts away his Wife, causes her to commit Adultery.*

1. We must note, that *Christ* here speaks of a Man's putting away his Wife, though she hath

hath not been guilty of Adultery, for slight and frivolous Causes, as the *Jews* used to do. In this Case, if the Woman thus put away, should be prevailed with to Marry another Man, the Husband that put her away, without sufficient Cause, unjustly is the Cause of her committing Adultery; for as she could not, by right, and ought not to have been put away for such Causes; so these Causes, for which she is put away, do not dissolve the Contract, or Bond of Matrimony; and consequently, by right, she is still the Mans Wife, who put her away; and therefore, if through strong and surprizing Temptations, she should consent to Marry another Man, he that dismissed her is, in a great Measure, the Cause of that Evil.

2. If a Person thus unjustly put away, should not Marry afterward, but be tempted to prostitute her self, all the Evil she doth, and the Adultery, she upon this Dismission proves guilty of, will, a great part of it, be charged upon the head of the Person, that in a humor put her away; it being here, as with a Person, who should set or place another upon the Brow of a Hill, in a dark Night though he do not push or thrust him down, yet if he tumbles and breaks his Neck, the Party that placed him there, may justly be said to be the cause of his Fall and Ruin, because he exposed him to apparent Danger; as much as *David* was guilty of murdering *Uriah*, by ordering the General of his Army to set him in the Front of the Battle; where, without a Miracle, he could

could not escape being killed. Even so here, the Command being given to *Christ's Followers*, or to *Christians*, if a *Christian* puts away his Wife for a meaner, and lower Cause than Adultery, he exposes her to great Temptations; and if, through the Devil's Temptation, she falls into Fornication and Adultery, himself is guilty of that Adultery; and therefore *causes her that is put away, to commit Adultery.*

VIII. *How he that Marries her that is put away, commits Adultery.*

1. In saying so, our great Master confirms the antient Law of God, *Deut. xxiv. 3.* where the Wife put away by her Husband, is peremptorily forbid to return to the Husband that did give her a Bill of Divorce, and put her away. She had Liberty indeed to Marry another; but if after his Death, or during his Life, her former Husband should be desirous to Marry her again, this, God saith there, is Abomination, and *Christ* calls it *Adultery*: So that the words of the Text, *whosoever shall Marry her that's put away, commits Adultery*, do establish and ratifie what God said of old to the Jewish People; *He that puts away his Wife, may not afterward, when another Man hath known her, Marry her again; if he doth, he commits Adultery.*

2. He that puts away his Wife, for a less or meaner cause than Adultery, doth not by that means, or voluntary Divorce, cancel the Marriage Bond, and the legal Contract betwixt him and her. That Bond continues firm

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firm and indissoluble, notwithstanding that Dismission; and therefore, he that Marries such a Person, that is unjustly put away, Marries another Man's Wife, and consequently commits Adultery. Under the Law, he that Married the Woman put away by her Husband, for Causes God then allow'd of, did not Sin, except the High Priest, who was forbid to Marry any Woman that was Divorced. And under the Gospel, he that Marries her that's put away legally, for Causes the Gospel allows of, cannot be said to commit an Offence, especially if the Rules we mention before, be observed. But he that Marries her that's justly put away, or divorced for Causes frivolous, or not allowed of by the Gospel, and so Marries her, he hath no power, no right to Marry; even a Person, who, notwithstanding the Divorce, is still the Wife of him that put her away, *he certainly commits Adultery.*

I N F R E N C E S.

Having thus resolved the Queries, suggested by the Text, it's time I should after all, add some wholesom Directions, whereby such Divorces, and all Desires after them, may be prevented.

I. There is no better Antidote against such Mischiefs, than Love, mutual Love, a true Conjugal Love; a Love grounded, not upon a bare satisfying the desires of the Flesh, for that will be of no long continuance; but establish'd upon

upon the lasting Principles of Duty, and fed by Pious Considerations. And they who think, that no less Authority hath joined them together, than God himself, and intended, that this Union should be great, and withstand all Temptations of Dissolution, except that of Death; and thought fit to represent by it the Love of *Christ* to his *Church*; They who make these Considerations the Foundation of their Love, will not be easily moved, to the desire of Separation.

Love in a married State being grounded only upon Beauty, and Riches, and other external things, when these fade, Love will fade. Virtue and the Fear of God, and the Oath that is betwixt them, these must tie their Hearts together; and where they do so, their Love, like a treble Cord, is not easily broken.

Love is the great Preservative of Happiness in a Married State; where that reigns, no desires of Divorcement can find Entertainment. But then it must be such Love, as the Apostle describes, 1 Cor. xiii. 4, 5, 6, 7. *that suffers long, and is kind; that envies not, that vaunts not it self, that is not puffed up, doth not behave it self unseemly, seeks not her own, is not easily provoked, thinks no Evil, rejoices not in Iniquity, but rejoices in the Truth, beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, and endureth all things.* This Charity we owe to all that are of the Household of Faith, more or less; much more

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to Persons of so near a Relation; who, besides the general Obligation, as *Christians*, have bound themselves, Vowed and Promised before God, and the *Elect Angels*, and the *Congregation*, to *love one another with a pure Heart, fervently.*

Love is an Universal Medicine. If the Infirmities of one Party be invincible, Love will bear with them; if vincible, Love will endeavour to reform them. If Crosses happen, Love will administer Comfort, if Prosperity comes flowing in, Love will exhort to Thankfulness; if Disputes arise, Love will appease them, if Quarrels are broacht, Love will quench that Fire. If Misconstructions be made, Love will rectify them, if Suspensions disturb the Mind, Love will reject them; if Failings appear, Love will cover them and whatever things are amiss in a Family, Love will endeavour to cure them.

Where this Love decays, there the Good Angel, that should guard the House, prepares for his departure. Where this Love is not maintain'd, Temptations prevail, and Quarrels come, and Differences arise, and Persons are let loose, and ill Thoughts do enter, and reproachful Language flies about, and the Parties

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become uneasy, and Divorces are thought of, and being difficult to compose according to Law, they are wished for, and desired; and if they cannot be had, there Adulteries and Fornications, and a thousand Evils are entertain'd, as woful Experience shews; and thus the married State, becomes bitter as Wormwood, which if Love had had the Management of it, might have been sweet as the Morning Rose, fragrant as the Balm of Gilead, refreshing as Evening Showers.

H. As unequal Yoakings are very often the causes of great Contentions, so where they may be, they ought to be carefully shun'd, and prevented. By being unequally Yoaked, I do not mean only Inequality of Age, of Temper, of Rank and Fortune, but marrying Persons of a different Persuasion in Matters of Religion; for if one of the Parties be Zealous for the Religion he professes, he will think himself bound in Conscience to draw the Partner of his Bed, into a Partnership of his Religion; and if the other will not yield, there arise such Flames of Discord sometimes, that Divorces and Separations, are not only desired, but unjustly Endeavour'd and Practised; and one party contrary to Law and Reason, and Conscience, and Modesty leaves the other.

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Of this we have too many Examples, not only where Protestants have married Papists, but where Protestants have joined themselves to Protestants of different Sentiments; not that the Differences among Protestants are of any great Consequence, but where Pride, Passion, Ignorance or Prejudice turns disputable Questions into Articles of Faith, and makes them Balls of Contention, they shed a bad influence, even upon a married State. Indeed where both Parties are of a gentle and charitable Temper, there is no great danger of falling out about Religion; but as such Tempers are somewhat rare; so where they are found, they may be influenced by external Causes and Motives, which may alter them; and though Promises are often made before Marriage, not to molest one another in point of Religion, yet false Persuasion afterward that it is their Duty to convert them, who are so nearly related to them, we see, hath prevailed with them to break all those Engagements.

Besides, in these unequal Yoakings, there cannot be that sweet, that mutual Encouragement to Prayer and Praises, and other Acts of Devotion and Piety, which ought to be betwixt such Relations; and though I doubt not, but it's possible to Admonish one another to serve God faith-

fully in their own Way, without Passion or passing Censures one upon another; yet the Thoughts, that one of them worships God in a forbidden Way, will still be an Impediment to this faithful and Conscientious Exhorting one another duly. And therefore though I cannot say, its absolutely unlawful to marry a Person of a different Persuasion in Matters of Religion; yet the Inconveniencies are so great that he, who duly Weighs and Ponders them before he enters upon that State, will think himself obliged to arm himself against all such dangerous Mixtures and Conjunctions.

III. There is nothing causes these Divorces more than unhappy and unfortunate Matches. And as such Matches are too often the Effects, either of Rashness and Precipitation, or want of enquiring into the Temper and Disposition of the Persons that are to make this near Relation, or of Covetousness and Greediness after Fortune and Riches, and Money, or of neglecting the advice of Parents and faithful Friends, or of a preceding vain and vicious Life, which is punish'd very often with such uncomfortable Conjunctions, so where the married State is embitter'd with many sad Ingredients, to prevent all such Wishes and Desires of Divorcement, these following

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Considerations, and Remedies, may be very useful.

1. Let it be considered, that though your Married State be full of grievous Troubles, yet it doth not, it need not hinder you from attaining Everlasting Salvation. It's true, People may make any State and Condition an Impediment to Eternal Life; but there is no necessity for it: Nay, in the Case before us, the Troubles in a Married State naturally direct you to seek a better Country; and if you are in a Capacity of enjoying God for ever, notwithstanding the Evils which befall you, you have Reason still to Praise and Adore the Divine Goodness; and since your Married State affords so little Comfort, To labour hard to be made Partakers of Everlasting Consolations.

2. Let another Consideration be added to this, that as miserable as your Married Condition is, this happens not, comes not to pass without a very special Providence; God either orders it, or wisely permits it; corrects you for great Purposes, and chastises you to let you see your Affections have been misplaced; and must be set upon Objects and Beings more Sublime, more Adequate, more Commensurate to your Immortal Souls, God and Heaven, and the Things unseen.

3. Under

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3. Under such a Providence the Soul must learn to be humble; to look upon her Sins as Meritorious, and the Cause of this uncomfortable State; and accuse her Carnal, Worldly, and Sensual Desires and Designs, as the Procurers of this Misery; and improve the Dispensation into Repentance, and Self-Examination, and Submission to the Will of God, and the Practices of Spiritual Devotions, and Aspirations, and Breathings after Enjoyments of a nobler Nature.

4. In this Case the Divine Power and Goodness must be adored, to supply you with Grace and Assistance suitable, that you may chearfully bear the Injuries, Indignities, and Crosses, that befall you in that State; and do not doubt, but your Prayer, if strong and importunate, will draw Honey from the Rock, and Oyl from the Flint, and Blessings of great Value from him, who hath declared himself a God, *that beareth Prayer.*

5. Another Consideration will be very profitable, that God by such Crosses in a Married State, teaches you Patience at home, that you may be the better able to practise it abroad.

Thus the *Philosopher* said of his Angry and Unquiet Yoak-fellow, *That he found his*

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his Silence, under the Effects of her Rage and unquiet Spirit when he was at home, proved very salutary and beneficial to him, when he was in Company abroad; for by that means he was the better able to bridle his Passions when he was provoked or affronted in Publick.

And St. Chrysostome hath this Observation upon it, *It grieves me, that Heathens are wiser than we, who are to imitate Angels; nay, God himself, in Meekness and Patience.*

Indeed we cannot imitate a more Excellent Pattern: He that is best able to Revenge himself upon the Insolent Wretches that affront him, suffers most. *Be patient therefore, unto the coming of the Lord; Behold the Husbandman waits for the precious Fruit of the Earth, and hath long Patience for it, until he receive the early and latter Rain: Be ye also Patient, Stablish your Hearts, for the Coming of the Lord draws nigh, Jam. v. 7, 8.*

SER.

And it is the right of the minority to
elect, under the right of the
majority, a committee to
investigate and report on the
conduct of the Company, and
it was the duty of the
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SERMON XXVIII.

St. Matth. Ch. V. Ver. 33.

Again, ye have heard, that it hath been said by them of old time, Thou shalt not forswear thy self, but shalt perform unto the Lord thine Oaths.

TH E Sense of these Words, we have *Levit. xix. 12.* but the Words themselves seem to be a Paraphrase of the ancient Expositions of the Law among the Jews; upon that Law in *Leviticus*, where it is, *Thou shalt not swear by my Name falsely, neither shalt thou prophane the Name of thy God*; which Words those ancient Interpreters expressed, (itslike) as it is in the Text, *Thou shalt not forswear thy self, but shalt perform unto the Lord thine Oaths*: And that's the thing aimed at in these Words, *Again, ye have heard, That it hath been said, by them of old time*: And, most certainly, he that forswears himself, swears falsely by the Name of God; and he that

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doth not perform unto the Lord his Oaths, or performs not what he hath Sworn and Promised to God and Man, profanes his Name with a witness.

Or, possibly, all that is said in the Old Testament against Swearing, was contracted by the Learned Men of old Time into this Axiom or Sentence, *Thou shalt not forswear thy self, but, &c.*

Or, These words are a Comment made by the Ancestors of the Jews, upon the Third Commandment, *Thou shalt not take the Name of the Lord thy God in vain.*

Or, They relate to Numb. xxx. 2. However it be, or whoever were the Authors of this Saying, it must be confess'd, that they spake conformably to the Will of God; and therefore these words are in effect a Divine Precept, and Obligatory for ever, as much as a Command in the *Decalogue*; and though it was said so by them of old Time, yet it is no more, than what the ancient of Days hath said over and over by *Moses* and the *Prophets*. And to discourse of this Subject profitably, I shall enquire,

I. *What an Oath, or taking an Oath, or, what Swearing is.*

II. *Whether an Oath, or Swearing, even in a modest, serious, judicial way be lawful.*

III. *Why Forswearing our selves, or Perjury, or not performing unto the Lord our Oaths is forbid, and wherein the virulency or heinousness of the Sin consists.*

IV. *What*

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IV. *What the Ceremonies in taking an Oath in most Nations do import, and why they are used.*

V. *Whether an Oath may in no case be broken.*

I. *What an Oath, or taking an Oath, or Swearing is.*

1. Whether with *Tully* we say, it is a *Religious Asseveration*; or with others, That it is a *Religious act*, in which for the confirmation of a thing doubtful God is call'd in as a *Witness*; or whether with the *Inspir'd Writers*, we call it, a *binding of the Soul with a band*; or whether we define it to be a *solemn appealing to God as a Witness and Judge*, the difference is not great, for all this is included in the notion of an Oath, or Swearing; and when the *Apostle*, *Heb. vi. 16.* saith, *Men verily swear by the greater*, meaning God, who is over all, the *supream Judge and Law-giver*, who is able to save and destroy; he points at all that I have said and intimates, That Men in an Oath do solemnly and Religiously call God to witness the Truth; or in case they swear falsely, or do not perform their Oath, imprecate to themselves the heavy Judgments of God; and this is also the import of that Saying, *Deut. vi. 13.* where God directs the *Israelites*; that if there be a necessity for their Swearing, That they should Swear by his Name. And for this reason it's call'd, *The Oath of God*; or, *The Oath of the Lord*, *Exod. xxii. 10.*

2. To omit other Distinctions. An Oath is either Assertory or Promissory, *i. e.* in an Oath we either assert and affirm the Truth of what is past, or of what is present; or we promise to say or do, or not to say or do a Thing. The former is commonly made use of in Courts of Judicature; the latter in Contracts, Commerce, and Compacts. Of the former we have an Instance in the Woman suspected of Adultery, who was to take an Oath, that she was not Guilty, *Numb. v. 19.* Of the other in *Abraham's Steward, Gen. xxiv. 9.* in the chief Men and Princes of *Israel* swearing to the *Gibeonites*, to protect them as their Confederates, *Josh. ix. 15.* and in others. The Words of the *Text*, though they include the Assertory, yet do chiefly relate to a Promissory Oath.

3. In every Oath, a Man hath to deal with two Parties, God and Man; with God, as the Searcher of Hearts, and the grand Witness; and with Man, for whose Satisfaction and Acquiescence in the matter the Oath is taken, which shews the difference betwixt an Oath and a Vow. In a formal Vow, a Man addresses himself directly to God, and God and he are the only Parties concern'd; but in an Oath, Man, as well as God, is made a Party; though the Obligation be the same in both; which is the Reason, why they are promiscuously used, *Numb. xxx. 2.*

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4. In every Oath, a Man obliges and ties himself to the manifestation of the Truth, whether the Oath be Assertory or Promissory; whether it be concerning something past, or present, or to come; and therefore 'tis call'd, *a binding of the Soul*, or Conscience, *by a Band*, which a Man cannot escape, or slip away from, but he must leap into Hell, *Numb. xxx. 2.* so that a Person Swearing, is bound to stand to what he has said, and to perform what his Lips have utter'd; and the Obligation rises not only from hence, because it is a voluntary Act and Promise, without the Performance of which he cannot be Just; but because he engages the most Sacred Being in the Promise, and gives God for his Security; God, who hath not only Power, but is concern'd in Justice to avenge the Perjury. So much of the Nature of an Oath. Let's consider.

II. *Whether an Oath, or Swearing, even in a modest, serious, and judicial Way, be lawful.*

1. That taking an Oath is not unlawful in it self, is evident from hence, because God himself hath, upon occasion, used it. *By my self have I sworn*, saith the Lord, *Gen. xxii. 16.* upon which Passage the Apostle makes this Remark, *Heb. vi. 13. When God made Promise to Abraham, because he could swear by no greater, he swore by himself; and*
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again, *Psal. xcv. 11. so I swear in my Wrath, that they should not enter into my Rest.* And the like we find practised by the Angel of God, *Dan. xii. 7. who lift up his hand to Heaven and sware by him that lives for ever and ever.*

Nor can it be absolutely unlawful, if we consider the end of an Oath, which is a confirmation of the Truth, in things doubtful, where other Proofs and Evidences fail.

The end being necessary in Humane Affairs, the Means, which is an Oath, must at least be Lawful. And this will farther appear, from the nature of an Oath, which contains nothing in it self unlawful. A Religious Act cannot be unlawful, nor Confirmation of the Truth in tyings doubtful unlawful in it self, nor the Invocation of the Divine Testimony unlawful; and if the Parts which make up an constitute an Oath be not unlawful, and Oath cannot be unlawful. Add to all this the consent of all Nations, which in other Cases, particularly in asserting the Being of a God, is counted a considerable Proof; where-ever any Civility or orderly Government takes place, Men led by the Light of Nature, make use of an Oath in doubtful Cases; to which universal Custom the Apostle alludes, in saying, *Heb. vi. 16. For Men verily swear by the greater, and an Oath for Confirmation is to them an end of all strife.*

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That the use of an Oath was Lawful to the *Jews*, is so evident, that it needs no Proof. The *Patriarchs* used it, *Abraham*, *Gen.* xiv. 22, 23. *Isaac*, *Gen.* xxvi. 31. *Jacob*, *Gen.* xxxi. 53. And *Moses*, by the Command of God, orders, that if a Controversie did arise, that an Oath should decide it, *Exod.* xxii. 11. It was an express Command of God given to the *Israelites*, *Thou shalt fear the Lord thy God, and serve him, and shalt swear by his Name, i. e.* If there be occasion to take an Oath, thou shalt not swear by *Idols*, or by *Heathen Deities*, but by the Name of thy God, who is Omniscient and Omnipresent, and will not hold him guiltless that takes his Name in vain; and to this purpose it is, that the Prophets give Directions; how the *Jews* should swear, in what manner, and with what Limitations, as we see, *Jer.* iv. 2. And Punishments severe and dreadful are threatned to him, that despises his Oath, *Ezek.* xvi. 59. But,

3. The greatest Difficulty is, whether it be lawful for a *Christian* to take an Oath, for not only *Christ* in the following Verse saith, *But I say unto you, swear not at all;* but we find the *Primitive Christians* were very cautious how they ventur'd upon an Oath, they not only dreaded those vain and light Oaths so common among the Children of the Devil, but they had a reluctancy to Swearing even on solemn and serious Occasions, thinking a *Christian* ought

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to be believed upon his bare Word and Affirmation: And, indeed, many of the sober Heathens, by a Dictate of the Law of Nature, were strangely averse from all Oaths whatsoever; insomuch, that *Clinias*, the *Pythagorean*, when he might have escaped the Mule, or Penalty of three Talents, which is about 8000 Pounds *Sterling*, if he would but have Sworn, though there was no Temptation to a false Oath in the Case, yet would not, and chose rather to submit to the Penalty, than wrong, as he thought, his Conscience.

But it were to be wish'd, that all Mankind were so honest, that every Man's Word were as good, and as firm, as the most solemn Oath; yet, considering the Corruption that hath over-spread the World, the Rules of Justice and Righteousness, and the Good of Mankind, make an Oath sometimes absolutely necessary, because Justice and Equity, and the Good of Societies cannot be compassed without it.

As to *Christ's* saying, *But I say unto you, swear not at all*, I shall tell you the Sense and Design of it, when I come to explain it in Order; and whatever Strictness, not only many of the primitive Believers, but some pious Heathens have professed in this kind. It is certain, *St. Paul*, who could not but know his Master's Mind, did, upon extraordinary Occasions, make use of these Religious Asseverations; for what are those Expressions of his we meet with

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Rom. i. 9. 2 Cor. i. 23. 2 Cor. xi. 31. Gal. i. 20. *I call God for a Record upon my Soul : God is my Witness : Behold, before God I lie not.* I say, what are all these, but solemn Oaths? And therefore it cannot be altogether unlawful for a *Christian* to use them, upon some Occasions; not to mention, that the Gospel doth not reverse the Law of Nature; and I have shewn before, that the Law of Nature hath taught most civiliz'd Nations to have recourse to them in things doubtful; and since it was lawful, under the Law of *Moses*, I see no Reason why it should not be so under the Gospel, not only because Controversies and doubtful Cases will arise as much now as formerly, but because an Oath was no part of the Ceremonial Law, and, consequently, cannot be said to be abolish'd.

There is no doubt, things so solemn, so sacred, so serious, as Oaths, ought to be us'd but seldom; to make a Trade of it, is the readiest way to Perjury: The Familiarity takes off from the Solemnity of the thing, and then there is an easie slip into Perjury: And therefore it may not be amiss here to prescribe certain Rules and Limits, and to shew when and where, and upon what occasions an Oath, the taking of an Oath may be lawful.

1. When the Magistrate, or the Powers which are set over us by Providence, do command it: This is the import of *Exod. xxii. 11.* and this is part of that Obedience

ence we owe to our Superiors, who are *Ministers to us for good, and do not bear the Sword in vain.* Among the *Jews* the Magistrate might command an Oath to be taken, *Numb. v. 19, 21* ; and why not among *Christians*.

2. It must be in things doubtful, and where there is no other way to come to any Certainty, but by an Oath, which even Men of a loose Life, if they have not thrown off all Religion, will stand in awe of, according to what the Apostle intimates, *Heb. vi. 16.*

3. In a Thing of great Moment. They that make Men Swear about Trifles, as they have no great Sence of Religion, so they consider not the Nature and End of an Oath. In Matters trivial, where the gain or loss of either side is inconsiderable, all wise and good Men have ever look'd upon pressing or taking an Oath as unlawful, it being too sacred a thing to be used in Things mean and contemptible. *St. Paul* made use of it, as we said before, but it was in Things relating to God, and the Souls of Men, and the good of *Christian Societies*, *2 Cor. i. 23.*

The wiser Heathen thought it lawful in three Cases only : 1. If it were to avoid Infamy and Disgrace, and consequently rendering ones self incapable of serving the Publick. 2. If it were to save a Man's Life, or to free him from some considerable Danger. 3. If the good of the Communi-
ty,

ty, or the common good of the Country Men are Members of, did require it, But in Money-busineses between Man and Man, they thought it more Conscientious to be a loser, than bring the Soul under the Obligation of an Oath; and let it be consider'd, whether such Men, who exceed many *Christians* in strictness, will not be their Judges in the last Day.

4. In taking an Oath great simplicity must be used, both in our Words and Intentions. He that swears to a thing which he either knows to be false, or concerning which he is uncertain, whether it be true or not, deviates from his Simplicity, and runs himself into the danger of Perjury; and so doth he, who by an Oath promises to do a Thing, which he either doth not intend, or endeavour to perform what he hath sworn to perform. And of this Nature are all Mental Reservations and Equivocations in Oaths, which is the reason why the Prophet requires us to Swear in Truth, *Jer. iv. 2.* The Temporal Inconveniencies that attend the performance of a lawful Oath, do not make the Obligation less; and therefore when *David* asks, *Who shall ascend unto the Hill of the Lord,* *Psal. xv. 1.* he answers, *ver. 4. He that Swears to his own Hurt, and changes not,* i. e. He that after he hath given his Oath finds the performance will be prejudicial to his Interest, and yet will not alter the Word that is gone out of his Lips. And this is agreeable to the simplicity we speak of.

5. If

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5. If an Oath be taken, it must be in Things lawful, not forbidden, either by the Law of Nature, or by Revelation, *i. e.* the Reveal'd Will of God in the Scripture; for this were to offer Things abominable to God, more abominable than cutting off a Dog's-Neck, or sacrificing Swine's-flesh, to make use of the most Holy Thing, in Things contrary to his Holiness. This would be to set God against himself; to make him Witness to our Impieties, and to get him to Patronize what his purer Eyes abhor. And therefore the Command is, that we are to Swear *in Righteousness*, *Jer. iv. 2.*

6. The Thing we Swear to do, must be Possible, and in our own Power, either natural or adventitious, and coming from the Spirit of God. Impossibilities are no part of the matter of an Oath, whether they be *natural* Impossibilities, such as it is to turn a Black-amoor White, or to make an Ox speak; or *actual*, as that a Man, who is at London to Day, should be the same Day at York; or in Law, as for a Mayor of a Town, to make an itinerant Judge, or a Baron, or Chancellor of the Kingdom, the Law giving him no right. There needs no store of Arguments to prove, That such Impossibilities are no Ingredients of an Oath, for they would make an Oath ridiculous, and discover the Swearer to be a Fool.

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7. An Oath must be taken with great Deliberation, being a Thing of the greatest Consequence, where the Safety, and Welfare, and Interest, of our immortal Souls are, in a special manner, concern'd. We use this Deliberation in lesser Things, and therefore must not be omitted in a thing of that Weight and Moment; which shews, That Children and Madmen, and Persons very like them, Men in Drink, or in a Passion, are no fit Persons to take an Oath, because they are not capable of mature Deliberation, while under these Circumstances, and therefore we are injoin'd and directed to swear with Judgment, *Jer. iv. 2.*

8. An Oath taken to *Hereticks* and *Infidels*, to *Enemies*, to *Turks*, *Jews*, and *Heathens*, even to the worst of Men, must inviolably be kept; as we see in the Example of the Oath the *Israelites* took to the *Gibeonites*, *Josh. ix. 18.* I will not charge every Member of the Church of *Rome* with the contrary Doctrine and Practice, especially as it relates to *Hereticks* and *Infidels*; but certain it is, that it was both the Doctrine and Practice of the Council of *Constance*, and the Advice of *Martin V.* to *Alexander*, Duke of *Lithuania*, whom he exhorted to break his Faith and Oath given to the *Bohemian Protestants*; and of *Urban VI.* to *Wenceslaus*, to do the like to Persons, who differ'd from the Church of *Rome*. If such a Principle were part of *Christ's Religion*, it would not only contradict the Law
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of natural Justice, which *Christ* came to establish, but were enough to render *Christianity* odious to the sober sort of Mankind, who in this Case might justly say, as he in the Case of *Transubstantiation*, *Let my Soul be with the Philosophers.*

These are some of the principal Rules to be observ'd in taking of an Oath; if there be any more, they shall be discours'd of in the Prosecution of the Subject.

Let us go on and enquire,

III. *Why Perjury or Forswearing our selves, or not performing unto the Lord our Oath, is so strictly forbid, and wherein the virulency or heinousness of the Sin consists.*

1. It is Dishonesty in the highest degree; a most base Treachery, and Pettidiousness, not only to Man, but to God. He that either Swears falsely, or doth not perform unto the Lord his Oath, deceives not only Man, but doth as much as in him lies to Cheat God, if it were possible; at least he discovers his good Will to do it, tho' he is not able. He that Cozens another with counterfeit Wares, or give him a Stone for Bread, a Serpent for a Fish, is not so great a Cheat, as the Perjur'd Creature, because the Person he Affronts, and seeks to impose upon in this Case is infinitely greater. He attempts at the same time to rob Heaven and Earth, God and Man of their due, which is the performance of his Oath;

Oath, a performance due to the Creator, and the Creature by all the Laws of Property, and a most solemn Contract; He gives both God and his Neighbour Shells for Kernels, Husks for Dates, and Words for Deeds, and Lyes for Truths, and deceives his Neighbour, particularly in that which all Mankind looks upon as Rational, to put the greatest Trust and Confidence in, and there cannot be greater Dishonesty.

1. It's playing with God, and deriding his Justice and Omniscience, for it is as much as granting and denying these Attributes. The Swearer in taking an Oath grants, that God is the searcher of Hearts, and a discernor of his Thoughts, and Words and Actions; and that he takes notice of them, and remembers them, and yet by his non-performance, acts as if all this were but Fable and Romance. Who can read the Passage of the Soldiers without trembling, who Crown'd our Saviour with Thorns, put a Reed in his Hand, bow'd the Knee before him, and cryed, *Hail King of the Jews*. Such a mocking of God is Perjury, the Oath shews, that the Perjur'd Man acknowledges all his great Attributes, and yet his Behaviour discovers, that he was in jest, when he made that Confession; and *Dionysius*, when he robb'd *Jupiter* of his Golden Beard, did not mock that fictitious Deity more than such a Man doth the living God. He deals with him, as if he were some Idiot or Heathen Idol, which hath

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Eyes and sees not, Ears and hears not ; and how great must be this Impiety.

3. It's profanation of the most sacred, and the most serious Thing in the World. An Oath is one of the highest Acts of Religion. It is a most solemn Invocation of his Name, a most solemn Declaration of his Excellencies and Perfections, above all created Beings, and a most solemn Appeal to him, from all Creatures whatsoever. This Opinion the very Heathens had of it, so that Perjury is profaning the most solemn Worship of God ; and *Belshazzar* was not guilty of so great Prophaneness in drinking out of the hallow'd Vessels of the Temple, as the Man who doth not perform unto the Lord his Oath, for he profanes not Vessels dedicated to his Service, but his glorious Name, and prostitutes it to the Contempt of Men and Devils.

4. It is a Sin next to *Atheism*, for there is very little difference betwixt believing there is no God, and believing there is one, whose Omniscency and revenging Eye deserves no regard at all. It is a Sin Man cannot well attain to, till he hath stupified his Conscience, and faith, at least, in his Heart, or wishes, *There is no God.*

And what shall I say more : It is a Sin, which kills at one Stroke. It doth not waste the Soul by degrees, as other Sins, but makes the Sinner a Child of Death presently ; so that if Death should arrest him immediately upon his Perjury, the Man

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Man is miserable as *Dives*, unhappy as *Judas*, undone as *Corah*, *Dathan*, and *Abiram*, and must drink the Potion of the Sinner's Cup.

It is a crying Sin, brings a Curse upon the perjur'd Man and his Family.

It calls aloud for Vengeance, awakens the Divine Justice, and will not let it be quiet, till it brandishes its Sword against the daring Sinner.

It makes a Man infamous and odious among Men, when it comes to be known.

It defiles the Land, where it goes unpunish'd, and helps to hasten the intended Judgment upon a City or Nation.

It leads to other dreadful and clamorous Sins; for God withdraws his Spirit from the Man who affronts him thus, and he tumbles down lower and lower, and becomes every Day more and more a Child of Hell, and of the Devil. It causes mighty Terrors of Conscience, even on this side Eternity; and God is so concern'd to revenge the Profanation, that very often he stays not till the Sinner drops into the burning Lake? but even here the profane Creature must feel his Vengeance. *Zedekiah*, for his Perjury to King *Nebuchadnezzar*, is taken Captive by his Army, and hath his Eyes pull'd out. *Saul*, for his Purjury to the *Gibeonites*, is the ruin of seven of his nearest Relations. *Vladislaus*, for the same Crime, loses the Battel, at a time when Victory seem'd to smile upon him, and all things

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to conspire to his Success. *Michael*, the Greek Emperor's Chamberlain, for this Sin is struck with an *Epilepsy*. *Ludovicus Boso*, for his false Oath to *Berengarius*, the Younger, is depriv'd of his Sight, and hath several of his Members cut off. *Elfred*, for his Perfidiousness to King *Elstan*, falls down backward, and within three Days dies. *Goodwin*, Earl of *Kent*, upon the same account, is choak'd with a Piece of Bread. *Polymarchus*, so heavy did this Sin lie upon his Conscience, that he fancies he is bit at Night by a *Weazel*, and then falls into those Terrors, that he lays violent Hands upon himself: Add to all this, the Example of those three Men *Eusebius* speaks of, who being Witnesses against a Bishop, *Narcissus* by Name, wish'd, that if he did not swear true, one that Fire might consume him, the second, that some Disease and Torment might overtake him; the third, that he might lose his Eyes; all which came to pass, as a Signal of God's being Witness, and Judge of their Villany.

IV. *Whether an Oath may in no case be broken.*

I answer, Since Oaths are not all of the same Nature, we cannot say, that every Oath, whatever it be, must be inviolably kept. For,

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1. A Man may rashly, and unpremeditatedly Swear to do a thing that is in it self unlawful, as those *Jews*, *Acts* xxiii. 12. and then certainly he is not oblig'd to keep it; for all Obligation is to some Duty, and if the pretended Obligation be to a thing sinful, it is no Obligation. The Man that Swears to do a thing that's sinful, commits a very great Offence against God; and if he should perform it, the Offence would yet be greater; and therefore such an Oath must be undone, for to keep it is sinful: It's true, to break it is sinful too; because it is a Profanation of the Testimony of God, but to keep it would be a greater; and of two Evils, the greatest is to be avoided: Such a rash Oath was that of *David*, 1 *Sam.* xxv. 22. when he swore, that he would not leave so much as a Dog alive that belonged to *Nabal*, because he return'd a rude, uncivil Answer to his Messengers; and of this Nature are those Oaths which the *Priests* of the *Church of Rome* make their Converts swear, when they have enticed them away from the *Protestant Churches*: The Oath they Swear must needs be unlawful, because it is to Swear, in effect; That they will give Religious Worship to the Creature, commit Idolatry, consent to the depriving the People of the Cup in the *Eucharist*, and believe against Scripture, Sense and Reason, and espouse Errors which the Word of God condemns; all which is sinful; and therefore such an Oath cannot

be kept with a safe Conscience, no more than if a Man should swear, that he will break open his Neighbour's House, or turn High-way-man, or commit Fornication: What is usually objected in this Case, that the Princes of the Congregation in *Joshua's* Time, swore a Thing unlawful, and yet were obliged to stand to what they had sworn to the *Gibeonites*. This, I say, hath no great weight in it; for how doth it appear, that what they swore was unlawful? It's true, they were to make no Peace with the Inhabitants of *Canaan*, but destroy them; but if we compare one Law with another, we shall find, that the Law of destroying the Nations of *Canaan*, reach'd those chiefly, who after a solemn Proclamation of Peace, refus'd to submit to their Power, *Deut. xx. 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16.* nor were they to make any League or Covenant with them, when there was danger of imitating them in their *Idolatry*, *Deut. xx. 18. Exod. xxiii. 32, 33,* which was not the Case of the *Gibeonites*, who both submitted to their Power, and the Laws of their Religion. So that whatever Inconveniency there might be in this Oath taken to the *Gibeonites*, there was nothing unlawful in it.

2. It is possible, a Man may inconsiderately Swear that which is impossible for him to perform, or which is not in his Power to do; and all *Casuits* agree in this, that there is no Obligation to Impossibilities.

lities. except what is impossible at present, should afterwards, upon alteration of Circumstances become possible: As if a Beggar, in danger of being kill'd by another Man, should swear, that by such a Day he will pay him an Hundred Pounds, knowing himself not to be worth an hundred Shillings. In this Case, as the Oath is sinful, because a Man swears that which he knows is impossible for him to perform, so there can be no Obligation to an Impossibility.

3. A Person that Swears may be under the Power of a Superiour, without whose consent he should not have sworn; in which Case, if the Superior will not allow of it, the Oath cannot be kept, as God himself determines the Case, *Numb. xxx. 3.* where he gives a Father and a Husband Power to null the Obligation, under which a Wife or Daughter hath brought her self by an Oath, or Vow, which should not have been made without the Consent of those whom God hath set over them; yet with this *Proviso* still, that if the Father or Husband hearing of the Oath, say nothing to it, Silence implying Consent, it shall stand in its full Obligation; and this will hold in the Case of a Subject, or a Son by way of *Analogy*.

4. When Men Swear, the Posture of Affairs, and the Circumstances of the Person to whom they swear may be very different from what they may be afterward; so that if the State of Things, and the ma-

terial Circumstances of the Oath do afterward change, because the Oath, when taken, had no respect to these new material Circumstances, it ceases to oblige; and *Cassius* do commonly instance in a Person's swearing to his Friend. to put a Sword into his Hands by such a time, if before, or by that time, the Person to whom the Oath is sworn should be distracted, the Performance of the Oath cannot be thought necessary; or if a Father should swear to his Son to settle all his Estate upon him, if that Son, after this, should attempt to poyson the Father, his Father cannot be thought obliged to perform what he hath promised; because when he made the Oath, he consider'd him as an obedient towardly Child. In which material Circumstances there being a Failure, the Obligation ceases.

5. In all Promissory Oaths, there are certain general Conditions and Exceptions to be understood, though they are not expressed; such as, *If God permit*; *If the Lord will*, or, *If we live and do well*, Jam. iv. so that an Oath cannot be said to be broken, if by meer Providence a Man be hindred from performing every Part of it, as long as there is no Will or Intention to break it; as if a Man should by Oath promise another to return such a Bond or Book, or Chest by such a Day, if before that time he should be struck with an *Apoplexy*, or be overtaken by a *Fever*, the Oath, in this Case, cannot be said to be broken, but must be

interpreted according to the tacit Condition
aforesaid, though it was not express'd. It
is so in other Cases, as by Example, if a Per-
son should Swear or Vow to God to abstain
from all Food and Drink such a Day, or so
many Days in the Week, though the Excep-
tion, except I fall sick, or should not be well,
&c. is not expressed, yet it is to be under-
stood, and the Oath, in this Case, cannot
be said to be broken, though, by Provi-
dence, the Party is hindred from the Per-
formance of it, according to his Purpose and
Intention.

6. Where an Oath is founded in a certain
Privilege or Prerogative, there, if that Pri-
vilege doth actually cease, the Obligation of
the Oath taken to that Person, considered
under that Notion, doth actually cease to
oblige, as suppose a Man should swear to a
Person in such an Office, that he will assist
him, and act under him to the utmost of his
Power; if the Person in that Office, doth
either relinquish the Office, or is put out,
or leaves it, or runs away from it, so as not
to be in a Capacity to take Care of it, or
to execute it, the Obligation of the Oath
of Fidelity ceases, because it had respect to
that Office, and the Persons being or conti-
nuing in it.

7. An Oath, so far as it clashes or inter-
feres with an antecedent Obligation, ceases
to oblige, an Oath indeed obliges, and can
super-induce a new Obligation, where
there was none before, but cannot destroy
that

that which it finds, or was in being before. And therefore an Oath taken to a Person, though in a very high Station, that clashes with the antecedent Obligation we have to the Community, or publick Good, or humane Society, whereof we are Members, must necessarily cease to oblige.

8. In all *Conquests*, an Oath of Fidelity taken to the preceeding Governour, ceases to oblige, if we resolve to stay under the power of the *Conqueror*, who by that Conquest gets a Right to the Duty of the Oath taken to him, who was before in Power.

V. *What the Ceremonies used in several Nations, in taking of Oaths, do import, and why they are used.*

The Answer is in general. *Ceremonies* in taking of Oaths have been used in most Nations, to increase the reverence of an Oath, and to oblige those who swear to be more cautious, and fearful of venturing rashly upon a thing so Sacred. The ancient *Phœnicians*, in taking an Oath, would hold a Lamb in one Hand, and a Stone in another, ready to strike the Lamb, to intimate their Wishes, that God might strike them dead, as they were ready to do that Lamb, if they did forswear themselves. The old *Romans*, upon the same occasions, would take up a Stone, and cast it from them, imprecating to themselves, that God might cast them away, as they did that Stone, if they swore

not

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not that which was true. Some Nations would light Torches, and hold them in their Hands while they took an Oath, wishing that in case of Perjury, they might be consumed with Fire; others would take a Knife, and hold it to a Pig's Throat, devoting themselves to the revenging Stroke of Heaven, in case of swearing falsely. *Abraham* made his Steward swear to him, by laying his Hand upon his Thigh, the place where the Sword used to hang, as an item, that he should fall by the Sword, if he performed not what he had promised by Oath, *Gen.* xxiv. 2. The Angel, *Dan.* xii. 7. lift up his right and left Hand to Heaven, when he swore, to shew that he engaged all the Power of Heaven against him, if the thing he confirmed were not true. The *Jews*, *Jer.* xxxiv. 18, in the administering and taking an Oath, slew a Calf, and cut it asunder, and the Person that swore, walk'd through the dissected Parts, to convince the Spectators, that he wished God would cut him asunder, if he broke the Covenant. The Customs of other Nations I omit, and shall only take notice of one in use among ourselves, which is swearing upon a Bible, and the import of that is, a tacit Imprecation, or Wish, that if we swear falsely, the Curses, Temporal and Eternal, contained in that Book, may light upon us, which if it were considered well, it would make some Men more fearful of swearing so often, as they do; and though the Sense and Design
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of the Words of the Oath, we administer in judicial Courts, are great, yet it were to be wished, that what is intended by the Words, and by the Ceremony used, were more fully and more largely expressed, to make the ruder Sort of People especially, more sensible of that Act of Religion, they perform in taking of an Oath; and possibly a great many Perjuries might this way be prevented, if the Expressions were more astonishing, and the Words more dreadful, as in some Northern Nations, with lifting up three Fingers, with respect to the Holy *Trinity*, they solemnly renounce all their Share in the Happiness of another World, in case of *Perjury*.

Inferences.

1. Though the Obligations of an Oath, may, in some Cases, cease, because the Oath may have respect to certain Conditions, Circumstances, and Constitutions, which failing, the Obligation must fail too, or there may be some Defect, either in the Object or Subject of the Oath, yet from thence it doth not follow, that Man can dispence with an Oath lawfully taken; for an Oath being taken to God, as well as to satisfy Man, how can Man, poor Dust and Ashes, give away God's Right, to whom a Man obliges himself in an Oath? An Oath is matter natural Right, and therefore cannot be dispensed with at Humane Tribunals, and if such Dispensations were admitted, there

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there could be no Security of the thing promised by Oath: Besides, these Dispensations would be giving away another Man's Right, which is against the Rule of common Justice and Equity.

The Bishops, or Popes of *Rome*, who for several Ages have attributed to themselves Power to absolve Subjects of their *Oaths of Allegiance* to their Princes, have, in doing so, invaded God's Right and Prerogative, and given the considerate World too much occasion to think, that what is said of *Antichrist*, 2 *Thessal.* ii. 4. is very applicable to that See; for his Character there is, *That he opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipp'd; so that he as God, sits in the Temple of God, shewing himself, that he is God.*

And this Power of dispensing with Oaths, the *Pope's Parasites* do commonly place in his *Oecumenical Power* and Authority, as he is *Emperor* of the whole World, though how he came by it none can tell, except it be as Highway-men come by a Man's Purse, by Fraud and Force.

Some to avoid the Sin of Blasphemy, upon which their Opinion borders, tell us, that the Pope only declares, that the Oath, in such Cases, doth not oblige, because of some great Good, which is impeded by it, or some great Evil, which is like to ensue upon the perpetuity of the Obligation: But they that know what the *Popes* have done in these Cases, especially here in

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England, with respect to our Kings and Queens, must needs conclude they intend something more by this Absolving, than a bare Declaration; for the Stile of their Bulls is Magisterial and Authoritative, and they attribute the Fact to the plentitude of their Power; and as if the sole Power were lodged by God in them, a Pride so great and intolerable, that one would wonder Princes of a refin'd Understanding, as some are, nay, of common Sagacity, do not see the Cheat, and lash their Arrogancy into better Manners.

I do not doubt, but an *Oath of Allegiance* may, in some Cases, cease to oblige, if either there be an Impossibility to perform it, or if the Prince dies, or resigns his Crown, or runs away, and puts himself into an Incapacity to Govern, and to protect the Subject; or leaves the Subjects in a State of *Anarchy* and Confusion, or to the Mercy of a *Conqueror*, because, in these Cases, the State of Things is new, and far different from that Men were in at their Swearing this *Oath of Allegiance*; but set aside these extraordinary Occurrences, which alter the Obligation, to think that any Man can absolve from the Obligation of an Oath of Allegiance, is to suppose a visible God here on Earth, which Title, though given to the *Pope*, sometimes by the *Canonists*, yet every one may see what fulsome Flattery it is, and if not downright, yet next to Blasphemy.

II. An

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II. An Oath being so Solemn, so Sacred, so Serious, so Religious an Obligation, we may justly wonder, how so Holy a Thing comes to be profaned, as it is in common Discourse, and ordinary Communications. Indeed this Swearing in common Discourse is a Sin that would puzzle a wise Man to give any thing like a Reason for, how a Sin so unreasonable, so unprofitable, and so horrid withal, should yet be so much espoused by Men and *Christians*, and become so very familiar, that Men play with Oaths as Boys do with Cherry-stones or Marbles. We can give some account of Covetousness, and guess at the Reason of Letchery, and declare the Motives to Ambition; but why Men should delight in so great a Profanation, and make so light of Oaths, whereby the greatest Wrong is done to God, and no Good, no Advantage accrues to themselves, nay, which themselves seem to have some Veneration for in a Court of Judicature; this, I say, is a Mystery, and one of the *Depths of Satan*, as the Phrase is, *Rev. 11.*

24.

Whether Men think that an Oath sets off their Passion better, and makes it more terrible and impressive; or whether they fancy, that their Words and Sentences have not their due Accents and Cadences without an Oath; or whether they believe, that their Mirth and Jollity is not modish enough, except it be accompanied with some Oath or other, or something like it;

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or whether it be meerly Custom, and a Sin, they play with for Companies sake, as they will drink a Glas more than ordinary to satisfy the Importunities of Friends. No Sin hath been, or is more common, or more frequently committed than this; it hath been so heretofore. *St. Chrysostom* complains of it among the People of *Antioch*, and we have reason to take up the same Complaint; other Sins have had their Eb-bings, and have sometimes abated of their violent Motion; but this hath been, and is still kept up, to the Grief of all Men, who are concern'd for the Affliction of *Joseph*. This shews what a mighty Power the *Devil* hath yet among the Children of Men, and how strangely his Kingdom lasts. Indeed, this is the only satisfactory Reason, why Men dare venture upon Oaths in common Discourse. The *Devil* reigns in them, and the Evil Spirit possesses their Souls, else they durst not, they could not be guilty of so great a Profanation. The Guilt would stare into their Faces, and fright them like a *Ghost* or *Spectre*, its Shape is so monstrous, were it not that the God of this World blinds their Eyes, and darkens their Understanding, they durst not make God thus subservient to the *Devil*. Do not they do so, when in their sinful Anger, or Mirth, or Jollity, they bring in the Oath of God, and the Wounds and Death of *Jesus*, to make their Sin more dreadful. There cannot be the least Dram
of

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of Grace, where this Custom prevails, nothing of the Spirit of God, no Sense of God, no Regeneration, no Conversion, no Repentance, no Change of Life can be supposed in such a Man. Here Darkness hath its Empire, and *Egyptian* Night dwells here.

In vain do such Men plead Custom. An ill Custom may, and if you will be happy, must be changed : There is no Impossibility, whatever Difficulty may be in it, if you will but observe the same Method you do in your Trades and Professions. A Man cannot naturally *Dance upon a Rope*, yet by use and taking Pains, and forcing his Body, and trying often, he learns to walk upon't, as steddily as other Men do in their Chambers. Men are not born *Carpenters* and *Painters*, and *Joiners*, and *Carvers*, yet what is difficult at first, becomes easie by use ; and why should it not be as easie to alter the Custom of Swearing, and to change it into a Facility of forbearing an Oath, if you, who are guilty of this Crime were resolute, and shew'd your selves Men and *Christians*, and would but do that in Religion, which you do in your ordinary Apprenticeships.

Do but resolve to forbear a Meal's-meat or two ; do but tie your selves to give a Shilling, or Half a Crown to the Poor every time an Oath slips from you ; do but bind your selves in a solemn Vow, to go five or six Miles on Foot ; do but speak to your Friends,

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Friends, and beg of them to reprove you as often as you Swear: Do any thing that's irksome to the Flesh, and punish your selves whenever you *take the Name of God in vain*, and sollicit the Grace of God, and pray earnestly for its Assistance, and the Conquest will be easie.

But if you will do nothing toward the abolishing of this Instance, or fancy it will leave you of its own accord, you refuse to be healed, and your Damnation is just. *As ye loved Cursing and Swearing, so shall it come unto you, as you delighted not in Blessing, so shall it be far from you: As you cloathed your selves with Cursing and Swearing, like as with a Garment, so shall it come into your Bowels like Water, and like Oyl into your Bones*, Psal. cix. 17, 18. And the Time will come, when God will swear in his Wrath, if he hath not done it already, that ye shall not enter into his Rest.

III. A Sacrament is as much as an Oath, and we have two standing Sacraments in the Church, *Baptism*, and the *Lord's-Supper*, in which we take a military Oath to our General, to our God, to our Saviour, to fight his Battles, to War against Sin, to wrestle with Temptations, to subdue the disorderly Motions of the Flesh, to stop our Ears against the Blandishments of the World. If all of you have not taken both these Oaths, I mean the *Baptismal* and the *Eucharistical*, I hope the greater part of you have. Now, *it hath been said by them of old*
Time,

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Time, God hath said it, and *Christ* hath said it, and the Gospel saith it; nay Nature say, *Thou shalt not forswear thy self, but shalt perform unto the Lord thine Oaths.* In the Sacrament of the Lord's-Supper, your Oath is voluntary, you cannot complain it is imposed upon you against your Will; and therefore you have no Excuse. You voluntarily call God to Witness, and the great Saviour of the World, and all the Angels that stand round the Altar to witness, and all the Congregation to witness, that you will be faithful to the Holy Trinity, that God shall be your Governour, and *Christ* your King, and the *Holy Spirit* your Guide, that you will resolutely depart from Iniquity, that Sin shall not reign in you, that Corruption shall no longer have dominion over you, that you will serve him who gave his Son to die for you, that you will conscientiously obey him, who laid down his Life for you, and that you will submit to the blessed Breathings and Motions of the *Holy Ghost*; and that as you are bought with an inestimable Price, and are not your own, so you will behave your selves like Persons who are entirely at God's Disposal. Search your Hearts my Friends, and examine your Lives: Are these Oaths observed? Are these Engagements kept? Are these solemn Promises fulfilled? Do you make Conscience of the Stipulation? If you do not, do you think God sits like an idle Spectator of your Perjuries? What can keep you in awe, if Oaths

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cannot? How desperate must your Condition be, if after this solemn League and Pacification with God, you wallow in your former Sins again? How shall ye be cured of the Phrensie of Sin, if you will not be tied by this treble Cord, where *Father, Son, and Holy Ghost* are called in as Witnesses and Judges of your Treachery? How can God trust you again, if you make a shift to break through these Fences, which, one would have thought, had been Security enough against the wildest Beasts in Nature.

I counsel thee, that thou keep the King's Commandment, and that because of the Oath of God, saith Solomon, Eccles. viii. 2. Christians, I counsel you all, that you keep the Commandment of the King of Heaven and Earth, and that because of the Oath of God: Thy Vows are upon me, O God, I will render Praises unto thee, saith David, Psal. lvi. 12. The Oath of God is upon thee, O Christian, thou hast sworn and promised to perform that Oath in thy Holy Sacrament of the Eucharist, thy Lips have said, or thy Heart hath resolved, to keep his righteous Judgments, not to be sloathful in the Business of Religion, but fervent in Spirit, rejoicing in Hope, patient in Tribulation, continuing instant in Prayer, distributing to the necessity of Saints, given to Hospitality, to bless them that curse you, to pray for them that despitefully use you, and to tread in the Steps of the Lord Jesus. If one Man sin against another, the Judge will judge him,

but

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but if a Man sin against the Lord, who shall entreat for him? said old *Eli*, 1 *Sam.* ii. 28: In breaking your Sacramental Oaths, you sin directly against the Lord, you profane the *Sacrament*, fling the Holy Bread and Wine, as it were, upon a Dunghil, and cast those *Pearls before Swine*; and who shall entreat for you. It's true, there is an Intercessor, that sits at the right Hand of God, to intercede, but for whom doth he do that kind Office? Is it not for those that follow and obey him, that their imperfect, yet sincere Obedience may be accepted? Men that despise the Oath of God, come not within the compass of those powerful Intercessions, till a deep Remorse doth change them. I would stand upon Mount *Gerizim*, and dismiss you with a Blessing, but the Anger of God against Perjury being so very great, to fright you from the very Appearances of it, and to oblige you to perform unto the Lord your Oaths, I must step over to Mount *Ebal*, and conclude with that Commination denounced against *Zedekiah*, *Ezek.* xvii. 18, 19. *Seeing he hath despised the Oath, by breaking the Covenant, (when loe he hath given his Hand) and hath done all these things, he shall not escape. Therefore, thus saith the Lord God, as I live, surely mine Oath that he hath despised, and my Covenant that he hath broken, even it will I recompence upon his own Head:*

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SERMON XXIX.

St. Matth. Ch. V. Ver. 34, 35, 36.

But I say unto you swear not at all, neither by Heaven, for it is God's Throne, nor by the Earth, for it is his Footstool; neither by Jerusalem, for it is the City of the Great King; neither shalt thou swear by thy Head, because thou canst not make one Hair white or black.

SO strangely doth corrupt Nature lean toward Things forbidden, that if by God, or by the Stings of Conscience driven from a strong Hold of a certain Sin, it will then sculk and hide it self in Holes, and Caves, and Dens, for a while, at least till the Storm be gone. If Men cannot enjoy the Satisfaction of the whole Sin, they'll be content with half of it, and if that be denied them too, they'll seek to retain at least some little Portion of it, and

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being driven out of *Sodom*, take shelter in some *Zoar*, in a Word, do any thing rather than part with all. When *Pharaoh* saw he must of necessity let the Children of *Israel* go, he fell to making Bargains, The Men may go, but the Flocks and Children, and the little Ones shall stay behind. It is so with an unregenerate Man, that hath severe Checks and Convictions of Conscience upon him; He is spoiled for an open Sinner, but is not made a Saint; is sensible he must not sin, and yet hath no Courage to be a true Convert: He is content, such a dreadful Sin he hath been guilty of should go, but so fond is he of the Garment spotted by the Flesh, that he will lay hold on the Skirts, and the little Ones shall stay behind, if he cannot have what he would have.

It was so particularly with the *Jews* in *Christ's* Time; they were sensible that Swearing in their common Discourses directly by the living God *יהוה אללהם*, which *Martial* corruptly expresses by *Anchialum*: I say, being sensible, that Swearing in their ordinary Communications, by the living God, carried something of Horreur with it, was dreadful and hainous, and black, and an Insolence great and abominable, and therefore were content, some of them at least, to forbear it, but their Mouths being used to Swearing, something they must have in lieu of it, and though they were willing to quit the greater Profanation, yet the lesser they

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they thought would do no harm, and therefore they swore *by Heaven, by the Earth, by Jerusalem, and by their Heads,* and other Things of this Nature, a Custom which *Christ* doth here peremptorily declare against, shewing, that whatever Palliations, Excuses, and Apologies they might make for it, it was as bad as Swearing by God himself: *But I say unto you, swear not at all, neither by Heaven, for it is God's Throne, &c.*

So that, 1. When *Christ* saith, *Swear not at all,* the Words are not to be extended to the utmost Latitude they will bear, but the Universality must be restrained to the Subject Matter, and measured by our Saviour's Scope and Design, and by the Sins he intends to reprove. When *Christ*, *John x. 8.* tells us, *All that came before me were Thieves and Robbers,* it's evident, this general Expression must be restrained to those, who gave out, that they were the *Messiah*, else *St. John the Baptist*, and all the Prophets of old must be comprehended under the Notion of *Thieves and Robbers.* So when *St. Paul* saith, *All things are lawful for me,* *1 Cor. vi. 12.* it must necessarily be restrained to things not forbid, else an Inference might be drawn from the Words, that *St. Paul* thought, Lying, and Stealing, and Fornication was lawful for him. After the same manner, the Expression, *I became all things to all Men,* *1 Cor. ix. 22.* must be understood of things indifferent, else it might be interpreted of his becoming an *Idolater* to please *Idolaters,* and

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so here, *Swear not at all*, must necessarily be restrain'd to the Sins *Christ* intended to reprove, which were the lesser Oaths, as they call'd them, used in common Discourse, and in ordinary Transactions, and Negotiations; so that *Christ* denies not, but that upon extraordinary Occasions, before Superiors, and at their Command, in a serious and weighty Matter, a Difference may be ended, and a doubtful Truth confirm'd by an Oath, the Lawfulness of which we prov'd in the last Discourse: But these extraordinary Occasions excepted, the Prohibition is universal, *Swear not at all*.

2. The Oaths *Christ* chiefly alludes to, and doth so strictly forbid, were the Oaths which most of the *Jews* had used themselves to in their Discourses, Dealings, and Communications, and had been taught by the *Pharisees* to make nothing of, or to look upon as harmless, and such as inferr'd no Obligation of performance: And there are two things that *Christ* reproves here. 1. Their using any thing like an Oath in their ordinary Communications. 2. The particular Oaths by any Creature, such as *Heaven*, and *Earth*, and *Jerusalem*, &c. That in this Prohibition *Christ* did not mean taking an Oath in a judicial Court, when the Nature of the Thing, and Superiors require it, is evident from hence, because such Oaths, by *Heaven*, or *Earth*, or *Jerusalem*, &c. were never used among the *Jews*, upon those publick Occasions, for then they Swore by the *Great Creator*.

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Creator of Heaven and Earth, as the Lord lives, God do so unto me, and more, &c. and consequently this Prohibition must be understood of ordinary Communications, as appears also from v. 37.

3. That which *Christ* intends to prove is this, that their Excuses and Pretences of not taking the Name of God in vain, when they Swore by *Heaven* and *Earth*, and *Jerusalem*, &c. were impertinent and frivolous, for in Swearing by the Creatures, they did in effect Swear by the Maker of them, and when they Swore by *Heaven*, they Swore by the God whose Throne is in Heaven; when by *the Earth*, their Oath was as injurious and offensive to God, as if they had Sworn by him, whose Footstool the Earth is; when by *Jerusalem*, it was as bad as Swearing by the Great King, God blessed for evermore, who had taken that City into his peculiar Care and Protection; and when by *their Heads*, it was less than Swearing by that God, whose Power and Goodness appeared in the smallest Things about them, such as the Hairs of their Heads, which they had so little command of, that they could not in the Root of it, turn a white one black, or a black one white. This is the thing *Christ* declares to the Sinners of his Time, and the ground of his Assertion is plainly this, because in an Oath, not Pretences, but the Nature and Import of the Thing are considered by Almighty God. *Men always Swear by a greater, viz. a Supream Being.* This is

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an eternal Rule, and whatever trivial Things may be brought, or put into an Oath, that doth not alter the Nature of it, which hath still relation to God, who is the Creator of all the lesser Things Men swear by, and is as much profaned by such Oaths, as if they had particularly named him.

From the Words thus explained, arise the following Observations, which I shall run over with as much Brevity, as the respective Subject will bear.

Observations.

I. Here we see that changing a Sin, or making some alterations of it, is not leaving or repenting of it. The Sinners Christ had to deal with in this place, thought they were safe enough, if they did but alter the Name of God in their common Oaths, and changed it into that of a Creature, either *Heaven* or *Earth*, or *Jerusalem*, or *their Heads*, yet that did not excuse them from the Guilt of a false or profane Oath; such are the Oaths we find used among the *Papists*, by *St. Mary*, or by *St. Paul*, or by *St. Peter*, or by *St. James*, and of this Nature are the wicked Oaths of Men among our selves, when they swear by *their Souls*, or by *something* that is not God.

The Crime is the same, whatever Alterations may be made in Names, and Words, and Phrases, and therefore, he that should be so silly, as to think he repents of Swearing

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ing in common Discourse, because he doth not mention God in his Oaths, or Swears only by his Faith, or by his Truth, or by his Soul, or by something meaner, and more frivolous, talks like a Changling, and is far from Repentance, as he is from the Kingdom of God, for Swearing by any thing that is not God, is made so great a Crime in Scripture, that God seems to be in doubt, whether he shall pardon it, Jerem. v. 7. *How shall I pardon thee for this, thy Children have forsaken me, and Sworn* אלהים לא by that which is not God; nay, 'tis called a forsaking of God, and then are these Oaths by the Creatures such light things as Men make of them? Away with this Folly: The smaller the Thing is, by which you Swear, the greater is the Crime, the rather, because ye ascribe that to a Creature, which is proper only, and due to God, such as *knowing the Heart*, being a Discerner of Secrets, and an Avenger of Falshood. This being in the Intention of an Oath ascribed to that Being, by whom the Oath is taken, all these are in effect attributed to the Creature, by which Men Swear, and then, besides the Prophanation of the most sacred Thing, the Swearer commits Idolatry; and is not this a Sin black, and to be abhorr'd by all that have any Sense of another Life? For an Oath relates to God, whatever the Thing be that's named in it: The change of the Name doth not alter the Nature of it, and if it be unlawful to swear so much as by the Hairs of our Heads,

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how can it be lawful to Swear by something of greater worth than these Excrements.

As it is in common Swearing, so it is with other Sins. Because such a Man doth not invent downright Lies concerning his Neighbour, and so spreads them abroad, it doth not follow, that he doth not hate him. The change of the outward Act, doth not make a change in the Nature of the Sin, and therefore if with delight you speak Evil of your Brethren, though it be no more, than what you have heard, and designedly report it, to render them Ridiculous, or Contemptible, or do them no good, when their Necessities require it, or it lies in the Power of your Hand to do it, it is Hatred and Malice, and Baseness and Unkindness still, whatever alteration there may be in the manner of venting it.

So you may be guilty of Intemperance, by eating and drinking more than Nature requires, or becomes a modest Person, tho' you are not Drunk, and be notoriously guilty of Luxury by a constant indulging your Fancy, Appetite and Love to the World, to the tickling and satisfaction of the Flesh, though with *Dives*, you are not every Day cloath'd in Purple, and fare Deliciously every Day, and guilty of Revenge by Word and Thought, though you do not break down your Neighbour's Hedge, nor assault him when you meet him, with a Sword; and guilty of unworthy receiving of the Holy

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Holy Sacrament of the *Eucharist*, by continuance in known Sins, though with some of the *Corinthians* you do not come disguised, and disordered to this Feast, and guilty of Covetousness, by being greedy and anxious after the Riches of this World, though you are not quite so sordid as some old Usurers, and of Fornication, by your lustful Desires, and Concupiscences, though you do not commit the outward Act; where a Sin hath several Branches shooting out of its Trunk, there a Man repents not, till all those dangerous Boughs be lopt off, nay, the Ax be laid to the very Root of the evil Tree, and to the sinful Inclination.

II. *We see here, how want of Consideration is the cause that Men see not, or are not sensible of the heinousness of their Sins.* It was want of thinking, that made the Men against whom my Text is level'd, fancy there was no harm in their Swearing by *Heaven* and *Earth*, or by *Jerusalem*, &c. whereas a little serious pondering of the Thing, would have made them know, that all the while they Swore by, and consequently abused that God in their common Discourses, to whom Heaven and Earth had peculiar Relation.

There are abundance of Sins swallow'd without chewing, which were they laid open in their native Colours, would appear big enough to choak the Conscience, and be found Morfels, which have Death, and eternal Misery in them, more dangerous than

than the wild Herbs in the Pot, in the Time of *Elisha*. Going to Stage-Plays, as they are ordered and managed in this corrupt Age, seems to be a harmless Recreation, at the worst, but a tolerable Infirmary; but if it be considered, that it is making our selves partakers of other Mens Sins, that by our Presence we encourage an unlawful Calling, that by going we expose our selves to very dangerous Temptations, which, instead of running into, we should flee, and shun, and are apt to laugh at that Profaneness, which should make us weep, that thereby we harden others in their Impiety, and give scandal to weaker *Christians*, that these *Theatrical* Shews are inconsistent with the very Design of *Christianity*, which commands us *not to conform to the World*, and requires, that *filthiness*, and *foolish talking*, and *jesting*, should not be so much as named among us, *Eph. v. 3, 4*, and bids us *to be grave and modest and serious, and shun the very appearances of Evil*, that they are contrary to our Vow in Baptism, and the Doctrine of the Cross, which enjoin us to mortifie Lightness of Behaviour, and to abstain from frothy and unfavoury Discourses, and allows no delight in sinful Sights, &c.

If this were seriously considered, instead of alluring, these Plays would fright; instead of enticing, they would discourage us from ever beholding such Shews, where *God* is so often affronted, and Religion derided, and *Virtue* ridiculed, and *Gravity* laught at, and

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and Modesty look'd upon to be a beggarly Qualification, and Vice represented in amiable Colours.

Neglect of daily Self-Examination in the Eye of the World, is an inconsiderable Fault, but if it were considered, that by this Neglect, our Sins and Defects remain unknown to us, our Vertues thrive not, our Graces grow not, and Blindness seizes upon our Understandings, and the greater and weightier Matters of the Law are omitted, and the Soul sinks into a Form of Godliness, and contents her self with Shews and Shadows of Devotion: I say, if this were considered, the Neglect would appear more heinous.

I instance only in these Particulars, but I would advise you to carry on the Notion to other particular Sins and Neglects, you find your selves prone to, and in doing so, you'll see an absolute necessity of shunning many things, which now you pass by without taking notice of, and of restraining your selves in that, in which now you allow your selves very great Liberty: In a Word, most Sins appear little, till they come to be examined, and viewed by the Word of God, and by the concomitant and consequent Dangers, which attend them, not that I would have any one think himself into Despair, or make every Mole-hill a Mountain, but I would intreat you so to consider your suspicious Words and Actions, and Desires, that you may get just Appre-

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Apprehensions of your Faults, and become more conformable to the Canons of Repentance, and the Rule of Righteousness.

III. We see here, since Heaven is said to be the Throne of God, with what Reverence we ought to look up to Heaven, where God is seated as it were in his Chair of State. The Phrase Christ makes use of, is borrow'd from Es. xlv. 1. Thus saith the Lord, Heaven is my Throne, the Earth is my Footstool, which imports no confinement of God to a certain Place, but is only a metaphorical Expression taken from great and mighty Princes and Potentates who appear in Majesty, when sitting on their Thrones with a Footstool under them. So that all these Sayings express only God's infinite Greatness and Excellency above all his Creatures. In Heaven God gives the most visible and most conspicuous Signs and Marks of his glorious Presence and Love; and therefore it is call'd his Throne, and because there is a lesser manifestation of his Glory here on Earth; it is call'd his Footstool, because there is less Art bestow'd on that, than on the Throne.

With what Wonder ought we to look on that embroider'd and bespangl'd Sky, that lower Heaven, where so many Lamps, and Lights, and Stars do shine! Good Lord! what Art, what Curiosity, what Order, what Harmony, what methodical Motions do we see there! enough to justify David's saying, *The Heavens declare the Glory of God,*
and

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and the Firmament his handy work. If the Outside be so gay, what must be the Inside! How justly may we admire God's Goodness, Wisdom, and Power, and cry out with the Psalmist, How wonderful are thy Works, in Wisdom hast thou made them all!

But with what Astonishment and Joy together ought we to look upon the third and the highest Heaven! where the true Pleasures are Spiritual, Great, Infinite, and Everlasting! where God in a most eminent manner displays his Glory to Angels and to glorify'd Saints, a Place which we have Hopes to come to: If there were no other Promise made us, but that of bare seeing it, it were enough to oblige Curiosity to do all that's possible to come to the sight of it: How much more then are we obliged to do our utmost, when we are promised not only to see, but to enjoy it too, even the Riches, the Splendor, and the Lustre of it; and how this is to be compassed I need not tell you, David having done it to my Hand; for having ask'd the Question, *Lord, who shall ascend the Hill of the Lord, or, Who shall dwell in his Holy Place,* he answers, *He that walks uprightly, and works Righteousness, and speaks the Truth in his Heart: He that backbites not with his Tongue, nor takes up a reproach against his Neighbour, in whose Eyes a vile Person is contemned, but he honoureth them that fear the Lord, &c.*

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IV. We see here what a mean Opinion we are to have of this Earth wherein we dwell, since it is God's Foot-stool. It is God's Foot-stool, and it ought to be ours too, i. e. As God hath put it under his Feet, so should we put it under ours, i. e. undervalue and despise it, not as it is God's Creature, but as it tempts to seduce our Hearts from him who most justly claims them. Poor Mortals! How do we dote upon this Globe! Creatures made for Heaven, and designed to be Companions of Angels! How highly do we prize these inferiour Comforts! How fond are we of this Dust! How enamour'd with the Minerals of Gold and Silver, which God hath hid in the Bowels of the Earth, to keep them from being admir'd. With what Eagerness do we bring them forth, and then fall down and worship them. Where these grow, they say, nothing else will grow: It is so with an earthly Mind, where that rules, no Grace, no Vertue, no Devotion thrives; yet this is a Lesson which we will not understand, nor consider, how inconsistent the Fondness of this Earth is with our Love to Heaven. We would enjoy both, and lose neither; would take our fill of the good Things of this Life, and of the Comforts hereafter, though Abraham in the Mansions of Glory, (and he should know God's Mind) was of another Opinion, when discoursing to Dives rolling in Flames; Son remember, that thou in thy Life-time receivest thy good things,
and

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and likewise Lazarus evil things; but now he is comforted, and thou art tormented, Luk. xvi. 25.

It's true, we must live, and converse, and endeavour after a Livelihood here; but is it therefore necessary to cling with our warmest Affections to it? Is it therefore necessary to rejoice in it, as in our greatest Felicity? Is it necessary to grieve for the loss of these outward Blessings, as if all our Happiness were gone? Is it necessary to make them an Impediment to our Duty, an Obstacle to Vertue, or a Stumbling-block in our Way to the Mansions of Glory? The Apostles were aware of these Excesses, and therefore they lay down Rules for our Deportment, as to the Comforts of this Life; St. Paul especially, 1 Cor. vii. 29. *The time is short, it remains therefore, that those who have Wives, be as though they had none; and those that weep, as though they wept not; and those that rejoice, as though they rejoic'd not; and those that buy, as though they possess'd not; and those that use this World, as not abusing it.*

V. God is call'd a Great King here. He is so, greater than Herod, whose Grandure the Jews at that Time admir'd, greater than the Roman Emperors, whose Magnificence was cried up in those Days by all the World; greater than Sennacharib, than Abasuerus, than Nebuchadnezzar, than Darius, and all the mighty Names which have filled the World with their Splendor: But why do I mention these Bubbles? *All Nations before him are but as the Dust of the Ballance, and as a Drop in*

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the Bucket; and if so, what a small pittance
of that little Drop, must the greatest Mo-
narch be?

Is God so great a King, and is it not rea-
sonable we should come before him, when
we come to pray to him, or to praise him,
with the deepest Humility? and as St. Ber-
nard speaks, "Conceive our selves to be en-
"tring into the Court where the King of
"Kings sits on a bright and shining Throne,
"surrounded with an Host of glorious An-
"gels, and crowned Saints, as poor Worms
"crawling out of our Holes, vile Frogs
"creeping out of our Mud, and approach-
"ing the Divine Majesty.

With such Thoughts let's appear before
him, and whatever Greatness or Magnifi-
cence we see and observe in Princes, and
great Men here on Earth, let's conceive
something infinitely greater in God, which
cannot be expressed. And if his Greatness
were duly represented to our Minds, and
preserved in our Hearts, how devoutly
should we pray! how humbly should we beg!
how reverently should we adore him! how
readily should we stand in awe of him! how
circumspectly should we walk! how dili-
gently should we obey him! how afraid
should we be of offering him sleepy, care-
less, dull, and drouzy Devotions, the blind
and the lame Services, I mean, the unwill-
ling, sick, and hypocritical, and such as our
Governors would scorn, and therefore God
cannot but despise. *For, Cursed by the De-*
ceiver,

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cever, which hath in his Flock a Male, and Vows and Sacrifices unto the Lord a corrupt thing; for I am a great King, saith the Lord of Hosts, and my Name is dreadful among the Heathen, Mal. i. 14.

VI. See here, what poor, weak, and infirm Creatures we are, since we are not able to make one Hair of our Heads white or black. One would think so small and inconsiderable a thing should be within the reach of our Power; but it seems it is not, and if we are not able of our selves to do the least, how shall we be able to do the greatest thing, *i. e.* become wise to Salvation! So true is that Saying of the Apostle, *We are not sufficient of our selves to think anything that's good, as of our selves, but our sufficiency is of God,* 2 Cor. iii. 5.

In natural, common, temporal, and ordinary Concerns, his Help is absolutely necessary, for *Except the Lord build the House, they labour in vain that build it,* Ps. cxxvii. 1, 2. How much more must this hold in Spiritual? And therefore, *Christian*, since the Eyes of all do wait upon that God, that gives them their Meat in due Season; behold the Rock from which thy Water of Life must flow. Thy Faith is weak, go to him, and he will make it mount up with Wings, as Eagles. Thy Hope is faint, run to him, and he will give it Life and Spirit. Thy Love wants Fire, address thy self to him, and he will enflame it. Thy Charity languishes, apply thy self to him, and he will breath Vi-

gour and Activity into it. Thy resistance of Temptations is feeble, follow him with fervent Tears and Prayers, and he will make thee bold as a Lion.

Happy that Soul, that is truly sensible of her Weakness; this Sense will make her breath and pant after the Living God; *When I am weak, then am I strong*, saith St. Paul, 2 Cor. xii. 10. i. e. when I am most sensible of my Weakness, God follows and blesses me with greater Strength. God loves to manifest his Power in our Weakness, and the weaker we are, I mean so as to be sensible of it, and make it a Motive to earnest Prayer, the fitter we are for God's fortifying Grace: *For you see your calling Brethren; God hath chosen the foolish things of the World to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the World to confound the things which are mighty, &c.* 1 Cor. i. 26, 27, 28. Hence arises the Glory of God's Grace, and that joyful Acknowledgment of St. Paul, and all good Men, *By the Grace of God I am what I am*: Every true Believer finds this by Experience, and joyfully sings with the Royal Prophet, as it is, Psal. lxxxiv. 11, 12. *The Lord God is a Sun, and a Shield; the Lord will give Grace and Glory, and no good thing will he withhold from those that walk uprightly.*

Blessed be God, who is both ready and willing, and hath promised, over and over, to give his enlightning, strengthening, sanctifying, comforting, and assisting Grace to
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the hungry and thirsty Soul, that calls upon him in Truth. For this Cause, as the Apostle did for the *Colossians*, Col. i. 9, 10, 11. *We will not cease to pray for you all, and to desire, that you may be filled with the Knowledge of his Will, in all Wisdom and spiritual Understanding, that you may walk worthy of the Lord, unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God, strengthen'd with all Might, according to his glorious Power, unto all long-suffering and patience with joyfulnefs.*

R 4 S E R:

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the hungry and thirsty Soul, that calls upon
him in Faith. For this Cause, as the Apo-
stle saith for the Comfort, Col. i. 29. 10. 11.
We will not cease to pray for you all, and to de-
sire, that you may be filled with the Knowledge
of his Will, in all Wisdom and spiritual Under-
standing, that you may walk worthy of the Lord,
with all blessing, being fruitful in every good
work, and increasing in the knowledge of God,
communicated with all Right, according to his
 glorious Power, unto all glory, suffering and patience
with joyfulness.

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SERMON XXX.

St. Matth. Ch. V. Ver. 37.

*But let your Communication be yea, yea,
and nay, nay, for whatsoever is more
than these, comes of evil.*

CHRIST having in the foregoing Verses declar'd all Swearing, except it be in Cases of very great Necessity, and Weight, and Moment, altogether unlawful, and utterly condemn'd not only Swearing by the supream Being in common Discourses, but particularly Swearing by the Creatures, as a thing horrid and dreadful, and not to be suffered among his Disciples, he proceeds, and lets us see, what Decency, Modesty, Sincerity, and Simplicity, is to be observed in our Communications, and Speeches, such especially as relate to Promises and Bargains, and the ordinary Affairs of the World.

And

And whereas Men might object, that they had used themselves to Swearing in their Discourses, and therefore could not leave it; he passes by that Objection, as frivolous, and childish, and silly, and not worth taking notice of, supposing, that he who had learned an evil Custom, if he will use the proper Means, may unlearn it again; and to be sure will most heartily abandon it, if he be a true Disciple of the Gospel, and seriously touch'd with a Sense of another Life, and the Weight and Importance of *Christ's Doctrine*.

Taking no notice, I say, of this common Objection, he peremptorily declares, what he expects of his Followers, with respect to their Discourses, Speeches, Answers, and Communications, and Colloquies with their fellow *Christians*: *But let your Communication be yea, yea, and nay, nay, for whatsoever is more than these, comes of evil.*

Where we have, *First, A Precept. Secondly, The Reason of it. The Precept, But let your Communication be yea, yea. The Reason, For whatsoever is more than these comes of evil.*

We begin with the *Precept*, and that imports three Duties. With respect to our Speeches and Discourses, *Constancy, Veracity, and Plainness*.

1. *Constancy*, as it is opposed to Saying and Unsayings, in which Sense we find the Expression used by St. Paul, *2 Cor. i. 17. When I therefore was thus minded, did I use light-*

lightness; or the things that I purpose, do I purpose according to the Flesh, that with me there should be yea, yea, and nay, nay; i. e. yea and nay, lightness, fickleness, inconstancy, and unsteadiness in Promises, saying one thing this Hour, and another the next.

2. *Veracity*, as it is opposed to Falshood and Lying, and in this Place also, we find the Apostle uses this Phrase, 2 Cor. i. 20. *For all the Promises of God are yea, and in him Amen unto the Glory of God by us, i. e. They are firm, immovable, not so much as a Shadow of Falshood mingles with them; and Heaven and Earth shall sooner sink and be dissolv'd, than these Promises shall fail.*

3. *Plainness*, as it is opposed to Oaths, and strong Asseverations, which is the thing directly aimed at by our Saviour here, and hath respect chiefly to our Promises to Men, and imports, that we are to content ourselves with bare Negatives and Affirmatives, and such Affirmations, and Negations, that People may depend upon them as much, as if he had confirmed them with an Oath: Not but that, if the Thing be Weighty, and of great Moment, some Asseveration may be added, such as Verily, Amen, of a Truth I say unto you, as we see Christ himself doth in the Gospel, where the Souls, and the Salvation of Men are concern'd; but in ordinary Affairs, or Things relating to our Business, Calling, and Employment, Bargains and Negotiations,

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in all Discourses, and Speeches, and Promises of this Nature, not only great Veracity, but bare Affirmations and Negations are the Things which become us, as we are Christians, and profess our selves Followers of the best of Masters.

So that, when it is said here, *Let your Communication be yea, yea, and nay, nay*; the Meaning is not, that in our Answers and Discourses, we must use no Words whatsoever, but only *yea* and *nay*, according as the Question is which is asked us. That's contrary to *Christ's* Practice, and the Apostles Example, which are the best Comment on the Text. No doubt we may Discourse with our Neighbours as long as we think fit, and say as much as is needful to the purpose. But,

1. The general Intent is to teach us, that to avoid greater Sins, we are to shun the lesser. To avoid Swearing in Discourse, we must allow our selves in nothing that comes to more than bare Affirmations and Negations.

2. It is to direct us, that in our Discourses we are to be calm, not to be moved into a Passion, and from thence into Asseverations, and impertinent Confirmations of what we say or promise.

3. It is to tell us, that we are to confine our selves to the Rule of Plainness in all our Speeches and Discourses, and keep within the compass of plain Affirmations and Negations, and take care, that our Discourses, what

what length soever we think fit to allow them, be conformable to that Rule, without mingling any thing of an Oath, or vehement Asseveration with it.

And this being the chief Subject of the Command here given, it will be necessary, I insist upon it, and enquire,

I. *Into the Reasons*, which make this Plainness in our Speeches, Answers, and Promises, expedient and necessary.

II. *Into the Causes*, which move Men to act contrary to this Rule, and the Vanity of them.

I. As to the *Reasons*, which make this Plainness very necessary, they are these following.

1. This is part of that universal Simplicity, which is to run through all the Parts of our Life, and Behaviour, and Deportment in the World. I suppose I need not tell you, that when I speak of Simplicity here, I do not mean Simplicity in a bad Sense, as it is used for Childishness, want of Understanding, or Foolishness: I grant, that even that true Simplicity, I am discoursing of, may appear Folly, and want of Wit in the Eyes of the World, but the best Answer to that Cavil is, That we must be such Children and Babes, if we mean to enter into the Kingdom of Heaven; and it is a Man's Duty, that means to be wise unto Salvation, *to become a Fool in the Opinion of the World,* 1 Cor. iii. 18.

By

By Simplicity therefore I mean, want of Guile, and, as we call it, downright Honesty, a Temper without Tricks, and sinister Ends and Aims, and Plain-heartedness, or a plain honest Endeavour to please God, and to do our Duty without subtil Evasions, and Distinctions, and cunning Devices to excuse our selves, from what is incumbent upon us, and without Pomp and Ostentation.

Now it's evident, that an universal Simplicity is required of us, 2 *Cor.* i. 12. where it is made the Foundation of our Peace and Joy, and *Matth.* x. 16. particularly a Simplicity in our Dresses, 1 *Pet.* iii. 1. A Simplicity in our Way of living, 1 *Tim.* vi. 8. A Simplicity in our Diet, *Phil.* iii. 19. A Simplicity in our Designs and Intentions, *Matth.* vi. 22. and if it must be universal, it must be in our Speeches, Answers, and Promises too. If it fail there, the Simplicity is not uniform, the Thread is not spun even, and Things are not answerable one to another; nay, the Tongue being the chief Member of our Bodies, the best Member we have, as the Old Translation of the Psalms renders the Word כָּבֵד *Pf.* cviii. 1. If Simplicity should be wanting there, the Frame would look ill, and be defective in a principal Part, and consequently deformed. And that these bare Affirmations, and Negations, are Arguments of Simplicity, is evident from hence, because they are free from mixture, not compounded of Things *Hetero-*
geneom,

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generous, and therefore simple, and plain, and like Christianity, which is the plainest and the honestest Thing in the World.

2. If our Speech must be always with Grace, season'd with Salt, according to the known Rule of our Religion, Col. iv. 6. it's soon made out, that this Plainness must be necessary, for it hath all the Looks of Grace. What is Grace, but converting our Souls and Bodies to those Uses, for which God hath appointed them? And who can deny, that these plain Affirmations and Negotiations are the use, for which God intended our Tongues, and the Faculty of Speech, since God always intends that, which is like to do most good, as this Plainness certainly doth. Grace discovers it self in a holy Watchfulness over our outward and inward Man, and these plain Affirmations and Negations are an Argument of this Watchfulness; and as Grace makes a Man stand in awe of God, so this Plainness is a sign, that the Man is over-awed by a supream Being, whose Will he hath a greater regard to, than the Opinions of Men; so that if our Speech must be with Grace, this Plainness must needs be part of that, wherein this Grace is to be expressed.

3. Hereby abundance of Sins are prevented, and several excellent Vertues are promoted. The particular Sins, which are prevented by it, are lying, and equivocating, flattering, and dissembling, cheating, and Scurrility, and foolish Jestings, Pride, and Wrath,

Wrath, Loquaciousness and Garrulity, Qualities, which do very ill become a Person, who names the Name of *Christ*, and is to do nothing, that's childish, and mean, and impertinent; and the Reason why this Plainness is the Way to prevent these Sins, is, because they are of a contrary Nature, and incompatible with it, as Darkeness and Light, and Fire and Water. The Vertues it promotes and preserves, are Gravity and Justice, Veracity and Modesty, Decency and Sobriety, Affability, Meekness, and Steadiness in Goodness, for these are the Effects of it, and this Plainness, if invincibly maintained, runs out naturally into these Vertues; so that it becomes necessary upon the account of Profit and Interest. But,

4. The Reason, *Christ* urges in the Text, is as pregnant, as any we have alledged; *What is more than these, comes of evil*, 'Εκ τοῦ πονηροῦ, which relates either to πονηρός, the Evil one, the wicked Adversary the Devil, or to πονηρία, an Evil Nature, or Evil Custom, or Sin in general.

1. If these strong Asseverations, whether Oaths, or other solemn Protestations in common Discourses, proceed from the Devil, who instigates Men, and suggests Arguments to use them, and who intends to debilitate, and weaken their Graces by this means, they cannot be good. It was a rash Question, *Can any good come out of Galilee*. But here the Expostulation is more just, *Can any good come from him who sins from the beginning*,

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ginning from the Father of Lies, and the Author of all Impiety? If it proceed from the Devil, it must be naught, for he cannot, it is not in his Nature to prompt to any thing that's pleasing to God; and if he should, it is with an intent to deceive him another way.

2. If this were not, it proceeds however from an evil Temper of Mind; and where Men are so fond of such strong Asseverations in common Discourses, it's a sign, their Minds are not season'd with a true Sense of God's Holiness, nor have they that Love to the Gospel they should have, and their Inclinations to Sin are strong, though they may have made a shift to part with some things scandalous, yet they are not willing to part with all that clashes with the Design of the Gospel, nor to follow *Christ* whithersoever he goes, which argues a Root of Bitterness at the Heart, though they do not, or will not perceive it, or take notice of it, so that their Heart hath a secret Aversion from all entire conformity to God's Will.

3. It is an *Argument* that an evil Custom prevails more with them, than their Duty, and a vain Humour of the Age they live in, hath the ascendant of their Piety. And consequently these Asseverations, whether Oaths or solemn Protestations in their ordinary Discourses, favouring of so much Evil, they cannot but be sinful, and odious to God, and the plain Affirmations and Negations in our Speeches, Answers, and

Promises must be necessary, and tending to the Peace and Satisfaction of our Consciences.

II. If we inquire into *the Causes*, that make Men act contrary to this Rule, we shall find them many and various, but I shall confine my self to these two, as the chief and principal.

1. *Imaginary Danger.* Men fancy abundance of Dangers, which they pretend they shall incur by their nice Watchfulness over their Words, and a precise confining themselves to plain Affirmations, and Negations. One cries, Men will not believe me, if I do not Protest and Vow, and use some such Expressions, which may give weight to what I say: A miserable Shift! if they will not believe thee, surely they suppose thee to be a very ill Man, or they do not take thee to be honest, or thou dost give them occasion, and they have reason to think, that thou art a Person light, and frothy, and vain, and perfidious; and in this Case, the best way to convince them of the contrary, is a blameless Life. If they will not believe thee, let thy inoffensive Conversation shew, that thy Principles are good, and pious, and serious, and be sure, upon all occasions, to perform what thou promisest, and they'll see there is no reason to suspect thy Fidelity. Speak nothing but the Truth, and what thou art very well assured of, and Experience, and the Exent of Things will witness for thee, that thou art an *Israelite indeed*.

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deed, in whom there is no guile, and if after all, they will not believe thee, thou hast this comfort, that thou hast acted according to the Will of God, than which there is no greater Comfort on this side Heaven.

Another cries, Men will think it Humour in me, and what if they do think so, where lies the hurt? as long as thou art satisfied in thy Conscience, that it is the Fear of God, that keeps thee within the Bounds of *Christian Simplicity.* *He that observes the wind shall not sow, and he that regards the Clouds shall not reap,* saith the Wise Man, *Eccles. xi.*

4. He that nicely regards the Opinions of Men, will never become a good Man: A plain *Text* of Scripture must prevail with a Man more than a thousand Censures of his Neighbours; if not, he'll be as far from the Kingdom of God, when he comes to die, as he was in his vigorous State of Life.

Another cries, I shall be counted a Fanatick, or a Quaker: But as to that, I am sorry that so pitiful a Sect, that turns Religion into Nonsense, should have so much as the Name and Reputation of coming nearer to the Rules of the Gospel in this particular, than we, who have Divinity, and the Articles of the *Christian Faith*, and the Duties of the Gospel so plainly, so distinctly, so orderly delivered to us. But see how Men fright themselves with Bugbears! Suppose a *Jew*, or a *Turk*, or a *Heathen* should have something that's good in his Religion,

what should hinder me from following it, if it be agreeable to the Word of God? Is it not our bounden Duty to think of, and to do *whatever things are True and Just, and Honest, and Lovely, and of a good Report*, Phil. iv. 8. And let these things be found among the *Brahmins and Indians*, and People, that never heard of the Gospel; they may, and ought to be Adopted into our Practice, as long as they are conformable to the Holy Ghost.

Others are afraid of losing their Profit, their Credit and their Interest, if they should not do in this Particular, as the rest of their Neighbours do: But this is as precarious a Principle as any of the rest, and he will have but little reason to believe, that he belongs to *Christ*, or hath any share in the Benefits of his Redemption, that loves the Praise of Men more than of God, or prefers his Interest before the Safety of his Immortal Soul, especially when *Christ* hath so seriously told us; *If any Man come to me, and hates not his Father and Mother, and Wife and Children, and Brethren, and Sisters, yea, and his own Life also, he cannot be my Disciple*, Luke xiv. 26. So that,

2. The true Cause is this, Men are unwilling to be true *Christians*, or *Christians* altogether. *Half-Christians* they are, and, with *Agrippa*, almost perswaded, but they will not go through with the Work. They love to play about the Out-works, and about the Suburbs of Religion, but they care not for entering

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entring too far into the Holy Discipline. So much of *Christianity* as is consistent with the Lusts of their Flesh, they are willing to embrace, but farther they dare not, they will not go; and therefore when Religion comes to clast with an evil Custom they have got, and which the World counts harmless, and which makes them good Company, and acceptable to Men, they bid Religion farewell, or they will not see, nor understand that *that Part of Religion, which crosses that evil Custom, is their Duty.*

Inferences.

I. What I have said, relates not only to downright Oaths in common Discourses, Speeches, Answers, Promises, but to all mincings of Oaths, and to those vulgar Expressions, *I Vow, I Swear, I Protest, I'll take my Oath on't, as I hope to be Saved, &c.* and to all gilding, or abbreviating of such Expressions, and turning them to a more tolerable Sound, especially in Matters frivolous, and vain, and impertinent. What do we think? Are Things of this Nature fit, do they deserve to be confirmed with such Religious Affirmations? How can we use them, with what Conscience can we venture on them, when the *Text* is so plain, *But let your Communication be yea, yea, and nay, nay; for what is more than these comes of evil.* Will you plead, that you mean no Evil by it? How doth that excuse you? Might not a *Papist* say, I mean no *Idolatry* by worshipping Saints and

Angels? It is not what you intend, but what is against the Will of God, that is to be regarded in this Case. *Christ* assures you, *What is more than these, comes of Evil.* As harmless as these Asseverations seem, they are Branches of an evil Tree, Suckers of an evil Root; they betray a Love to Evil in the Soul; they discover a Heart Ignorant of the Nature of the Gospel of *Christ*, and therefore they must be left, and shun'd, and watch'd against, for they are sinful, and forbid, and contrary to the Mind of God.

There is a Fondness in most Men to be believed in what they say, and this Fondness they discover even in telling things, which they have only by hear-say, and very often false, and that tempts them to these extravagant Additionals, I have mention'd; and since that Fondness is the occasion of it, even that must be subdued and mortified.

It's true, a Man ought to be desirous to be believed, but then it must be in things, Serious and Weighty, and of Importance, and such as he hath a moral Assurance of, that they are true, and that desire must go no farther, than God hath allowed of. And since not only in Things trivial, and complimentary, and telling of Stories, but also in ordinary Promises, Bargains, and Negotiations, he hath forbid these solemn Confirmations, and Protestations, as pleasing as they may be to Flesh and Blood, and as customary as they are, and as agreeable

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as they are to the Humour of the Times, they must be forborn.

What's the Reason, that we hear People say sometimes of a Man, that they will take his Word for a Thousand Pound, and that if such a one hath said it, they'll believe it sooner, than they will do another Man upon his Bond. Is it not, because they are assured of his Honesty, Sincerity, Piety, Constancy, Veracity, and unfeigned Goodness? Is not this a mighty Commendation? Is it not an excellent Character? And are not these fit Examples for us to follow? Doth a Principle of real Goodness, give a Man such Reputation among his Neighbours, and is it not fit we should imitate these Patterns? We that stand so much upon our Credit, why are we loth to venture upon that, which will procure us such Credit, not only with Men, but with God too?

Were we *Christians* indeed, and did Men see, that we live up to the Rules of our Great Master without wavering, they would depend upon our Promises as much, as they do upon other Mens Oaths, and more too; but when they see us Treacherous, and Perfidious, and Regardless of our Words, and that we take no heed to our Ways, when they find that we pretend to Religion, and yet can be Knaves; that we call our selves Children of God, and yet can Cheat and Defraud; that we commend good Men, and talk well, and can undermine, and over-

reach another in a Bargain, no wonder if they do mistrust us: And then we run our selves into a necessity of helping out our want of Sincerity with Protestations, and needless Asseverations; and thus by degrees we come to venture upon Oaths, and to other Sins, and undoe our Souls. Our Religion was intended to make us the honestest Men in the World; and were we true to our Principles, there would be no need of so many Bonds, and Obligations, and Indentures, and Counterparts, and giving of Securities, and Sollicitations to second our Word, and Promises with Oaths and Vows, and Protestations, as now there is. But all that can be said in this Point, is this: If Men be truly converted to the Laws of *Christ*, they will be Just and Honest, and Sincere, and Upright, and Faithful, and True, and Invincibly so; if they are not, their Conversion is Nonsense, their Regeneration a Fable, their Love to God a Romance, their Repentance a Fancy, and their Piety Paint, and Varnish.

II. We see here, that the Government of our Tongues, requires our special Care. *He that offends not in Word, is a perfect Man*, saith St. James, Jam. iii. 2. *and able also to bridle the whole Body*. It's one great Lesson of our Religion, to labour after Perfection, as appears by the frequent Commands, 2 Cor. xiii. 9. *Hebr. vi. 1. Jam. i. 4. 2 Cor. xiii. 11.* and this Perfection is not to be attained, except our Care and Watchfulness extend to our

our Speeches, and Words, and Discourses, and Communications in Conversation; and how this Care is to be expressed, I shall briefly shew in the following Directions.

1. Let's always propose to our selves a good end in Speaking, either to rectifie the Mistakes of others, or to Instruct, or to Counsel, or to Exhort, or to Comfort, or to Reprove, or to Edifie others, or to acquaint them with the true Merit of the Cause, or to prevent frothy or impertinent Discourses. This is part of that Discretion, which is made a good Man's Character, *Psal. cxii. 5.* He that speaks with an Intent either to be applauded for his Wit, or Learning, or Piety, or to make the Company laugh, or meerly to trifle away the Time, or to provoke others to Wrath, &c. such a Person hath no great Care of his everlasting Concerns, and puts no Oil to his Lamp; and therefore if the Bridegroom should come unwares, he'll have Oil to buy when the Doors are going to be shut.

2. Let's speak Circumspectly, so that in our Discourses, neither God be abused by Profaneness, nor Scripture undervalued by wrong Applications, nor our Neighbour rendred contemptible by Calumny, nor our Souls wounded by Lying, nor Religion blacken'd by Misrepresentations, nor weak *Christians* scandaliz'd by immoderate Liberty, nor other Men harden'd in their Sins by flattering Compliances. To this purpose *Solomon, Eccles. v. 2.* *Be not rash with thy Mouth,*

258 *Sermon Thirtieth, on* Vol. II.
*Mouth, and let not thy Heare be hasty to utter
any thing before God.*

3. Let's speak modestly of our selves especially, and of our Duties and Performances, and Accomplishments, and not only with respect to our selves, but in regard of others too, when Kindnesses and Obligations, and Admiration of their Gifts prompts us to speak in their Commendation. There is great Modesty requir'd, particularly when Inferiors speak to their Superiors, Disciples to their Teachers, Servants to their Masters, Children to their Parents, and Hearers to their spiritual Pastors, Young-Men to the Aged. This is Part of that Submission, and Subjection, and Humility, most earnestly pressed upon us, 1 Pet. v. 5.

4. Let's speak opportunely, suitably to the Time and Place we are in. *A Word fitly spoken, is like Apples of Gold in Pictures of Silver,* Prov. xxv. 11. Comfort is proper for the Afflicted, Reproof for the Obstinate, Admonition for the Tractable, Instruction for the Ignorant, and Colloquies Divine and Spiritual for the House of God; and when God sends the Sword, the Prophet asks very justly, *Should we then make Mirth?* Ezek. xxi. 10.

5. Let's talk sparingly. *In the multitude of Words there wants not Sin, but he that refrains his Tongue is wise,* Prov. x. 19. A Man that talks much, had need be a very accomplish'd Person, if he doth not run out into something contrary to Truth or good Man-

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Manners. This Rule deserves to be observ'd so much the more, because multitude of Words is made the Character of a Fool, Ecclesi. x. 14.

6. Let's use our selves to talk Biously. It is a commanded Duty, Ephes. iv. 29. This is wanting in most Companies; nay, it is become a Piece of Rudeness, and a Mark of ill Breeding, to talk of *Jesus Christ*, when People visit one another, and that's one great Reason of the Decay of Piety among us. St. *Austin*, in his Confession, tells us, that he and his Mother standing together, and looking out of a Window into a Garden, fell a discoursing of the Nature of the everlasting Felicity in Heaven, and drawing Comparisons from the Herbs and Flowers, they saw before them, and then running higher, to the Contemplation of the Sun, and Moon, and Stars, and reflecting on the far greater Glory in the higher Mansions, they were so ravish'd with one anothers Discourses, that they forgot they were on Earth. Indeed, till Men come to delight in such Discourses, they have not yet receiv'd that Spirit, whereby we relish the Things which are freely given us of God.

These are some of those many Directions which might here be given. And to put all this in practice, there are two things to be observed.

1. We must oblige our selves to do it, by all the Arguments which have Power to bind

bind us. And among these, a vigorous Resolution, and punishing our selves, if we break it, may justly be said to be one of the most effectual Methods to compass it.

2. As we know how Good Men have been concern'd about this Watchfulness over their Tongues, so with them we must pray, and pray earnestly for the Divine Assistance; for the Tongue is not easily tamed, or reduced to good Order. God must be interested, and his victorious Grace implored in the Endeavour; and if you want a Form of Prayer to that purpose, *David* hath given us one, *Psal. cxli. 3. Set a watch, O Lord, before my Mouth, and keep the Door of my Lips.* I conclude with *St. James's* remarkable Sentence, *Jam. i. 26. If any Man among you seems to be religious, and bridles not his Tongue, deceiving his own Heart, that Man's Religion is vain.*

SER.

SERMON XXXI.

St. Matth. Ch. V. Ver. 38, 39.

*Ye have heard, that it hath been said,
An Eye for an Eye, and a Tooth for a
Tooth : But I say unto you, That ye
resist not evil, but whosoever shall smite
thee on the right Cheek, turn to him
the other also.*

I Expect, that upon the reading of these Words of our Saviour, many of you will be ready to reply, as the Men of *Capernaum*, when they heard *Christ* discouraging of eating his Flesh, and drinking his Blood, *This is a hard Saying, who can hear it?* But not to mention, that Handships are no Discouragements to industrious Men from prosecuting their Designs, and that unwilling Minds will be ever complaining of Difficulties, the true reason of such Complaints, is not any internal Difficulty of the Thing it self, but want of a

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renew'd and sancti'y'd Heart. That may appear difficult to one which is not so to another, and sick Men may not be able to bear what vigorous and healthy Persons can. But of this I shall have occasion to Discourse of more largely in the Sequel:

As to the *Text*; *Christ* seems to contradict and oppose his Saying to the Command of God, but he doth not; he only shews what is better, and establishe that which is better into a Law, but doth not find fault with a Law of God's making.

To make this appear,

I shall consider, I. *What was said of old; and upon what Account.* And,

II. *What Christ says to us, that pretend to be his Followers.*

I. *What was said of old, and upon what Account.* *Ye have heard, that it hath been said, An Eye for an Eye, and a Tooth for a Tooth.*

I do not doubt, but *Christ* quotes and repeats these Words, not precisely, as they are in the Law of *Moses*, but as the ancient Masters of Tradition: and from them the *Scribes* and *Pharisees* had expressed, and contracted, and applied them to the lawfulness of private Revenge. And therefore, *Ye have heard*, saith our Saviour, *that it hath been said*, i.e. by them of old Time, by the learned Doctors of the former Ages.

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Indeed the Words are in the Law of *Moses*, only in that Fountain they are larger and fuller than in the Stream, as deliver'd to the *Jews* by their Ancestors. However, though *Christ* quotes these Words, as the Saying of the ancient Masters of Tradition, yet it's certain, that those ancient Doctors had regard to the Law of *Moses*, for so we read, *Exod. xxi. 23. And if any mischief follow, then thou shalt give Life for Life, Eye for Eye, Tooth for Tooth, Hand for Hand, Foot for Foot, Burning for Burning, Wound for Wound, Stripe for Stripe.*

Concerning which Law I note,

1. That this was the most ancient Way of punishing Offenders, especially private Men, when they had offered any Injury to the Body of their Neighbour. He that had unjustly hurt another in a certain Limb, or Part, suppose the Eye, or Foot, or Hand, or Tooth, he was to suffer in that Part in which he had been prejudicial to the other; and this was usual, not only among the *Jews*, but among the ancient *Greeks* and *Romans* too; and it's probable they learned the use of this Retaliation, from the Methods of God's Providence, which they observed working after that manner, which makes *Adonibezek* take notice, *Judg. i. 7. Threescore and ten Kings, with their Thumbs and right Toes cut off, have gathered their Meat under my Table; as I have done, so God hath requited me.*

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2. In process of Time, by Example and Consent, it was agreed, that the Person hurt should have Cost given him for the Damages he sustained, and the Retaliation or Punishment in the same kind was changed into pecuniary Mulcts, or so much Money, or so much in Goods, as was judged by wise Men to tantamount to the Hurt done, was given to the Party injured, if he complain'd; and thus Compensation was made. And yet;

3. This Law of God in *Moses* did not forbid the *Jews* Patience under Injuries. Notwithstanding this Law, they might very lawfully suffer themselves to be hurt, without Contradiction or Revenge, which is the reason why *Moses* is commended for his Meekness and Patience, when *Aaron* and

Numb. xii. *Miriam* murmured against him.

1, 2. And *David's* Patience under *Shimei's* Revilings, 2 *Sam. xvi. 10.* was not the least Jewel in his Crown; I mean, was one of the most eminent Vertues of his Life. However,

4. This Law did not give the *Jews* liberty to exercise any private Revenge, i. e. by virtue of this Law, a *Jew* could not, of his own accord, wound him in the Eye, or Foot, or Tooth, &c. who had wounded him in any of those Parts; but he had liberty to go and accuse the Offender to the Magistrate, who was oblig'd to do him Justice, and to retaliate the Injury upon the Offender; and therefore it is said, *Exod. xxi. 22. That the Judges were to determine it.* Add to all this,

5. That

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5. That even to bring the Offender before the Magistrate, in order to have him punish'd, was rather permitted than commanded, much like the Divorces we have spoken of, to prevent a greater Evil, such as Murther, and excessive private Revenges. Just as our Law permits Men to take Interest, Six *per Cent*, but, for all that, a Man may chuse whether he will take any Interest at all. This must necessarily be so; for notwithstanding this Law, Patience under Injuries was a Vertue still, even among the *Jews*, to whom it was permitted by their Law to demand an Eye for an Eye, and a Tooth for a Tooth, or a Punishment in the same kind.

Thus stood the Case among the *Jews*; and here lay their Crime: The permission God gave them to demand Retaliation of the Magistrate, to prevent a greater Evil, by the Instigation and Instruction of the *Phar-sees*, they applied to the lawfulness of private Revenge, and returning Evil for Evil, and made that a Duty, which at the best was but a permission vouchsafed to Carnal Men more than to Spiritual, and would not understand, that the Eternal Law of Goodness requir'd nobler Actions.

Christ, who came to perfect Human Nature, and to reduce things to the best and primitive State, makes that Patience under Injuries, which was at least lawful among the *Jews* a Duty, and what they might

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have done he commands to be done, which is the second thing to be consider'd.

II. *What Christ says to us, who pretend to be his Followers. But I say unto you, that you resist not Evil, i. e. the Evil Man that doth you an Injury. But whosoever shall smite thee on the right Cheek, turn to him the other also.* In which Precept,

1. *Christ intimates, that the Law of Retaliation, An Eye for an Eye, &c. was suited to the Jewish Oeconomy, when the Church was in her Infancy; but that was no just Obstacle to God's Endeavours to lead Men to higher Perfection, and consequently no Contradiction to the Law he was going to deliver. And since not resisting the Evil, or Injurious Man was better than Resisting, because it shew'd greater Courage, it was convenient, that what is better should be chosen by his Disciples, who had better Promises: Even in the Old Testament Non-resistance was better than Resistance; and since it was necessary, that his Followers should apply themselves to what was best, he enjoins this Non-resistance.*

2. *By saying so, he doth not forbid defending our selves, in case we receive an Injury, and shewing Reasons why we are unjustly dealt withal, for he himself did so when he stood before the High-Priest, and one of the Officers struck him with the Palm of his Hand, John xviii. 23. If I have*
spoken

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spoken Evil, bear witness of the Evil, but if Well, why smitest thou me?

Nor, 3. Doth *Christ* forbid speaking to others, to clear our Innocence to the Unjust, or Injurious Man, for *St. Paul* being wrongfully accused of the *Jews*, and upon the point of being killed, having been struck but just before, called a *Centurion* to him, and desired him to bring his Sister's Son to the chief Captain, to vindicate his Innocence, and to rectifie his Mistakes concerning the Aspersions the *Jews* had cast upon him, *Acts* xxiii. 17.

Nor, 4. Doth *Christ* forbid here, (out of Love to Justice, and out of Respect to the publick Good) to address our selves to the Magistrate in greater Injuries, where Life and Fortune are concerned, to complain to him, and entreat him to bind the Offender to his good Behaviour, and restrain him from doing greater Mischief, for *St. Paul* himself did so, by appealing unto *Cesar*, *Acts* xxv. 11. But,

5. That which is directly forbidden here, is not only private Revenge, and returning Evil for Evil, but even going to the Magistrates, in Case of lesser Injuries, such as *Smiting on the Cheek*, to have the Wrong reveng'd and punish'd.

And, 6. That which is directly commanded here, is this, rather than return Evil for Evil, to endure a greater Evil. *Who-so-ever shall smite thee on thy right Cheek, turn to him the other also*, i. e. rather than strike him

again that strikes thee, offer to him the other Cheek also.

So that upon a Review of the whole, we find these Three Duties enjoined us, as we are *Christians*.

I. *We are not to return Evil for Evil.*

I'. *In lesser Injuries we are not presently to run to the Magistrate, to have the Offender punished.*

III. *Rather than return Evil for Evil, we are to endure a greater Evil.*

I. *We are not to return Evil for Evil.* This is not only the Language of the Gospel, but the Language of the Law too; for *Solomon, Prov. xxiv. 29.* gave Counsel to this purpose, *say not, I will do so to him, i. e. my Neighbour, as he hath done to me, I will render to the Man according to his Work;* which shews, that even in the old Testament, as I said before, it was counted a nobler Thing not to return Evil for Evil, than to return it; and that the Retaliation *Moses* speaks of, was only permitted for the Hardness of their Hearts. The New Testament is so full of Commands of this Nature, and I may add Examples too, that it is almost needless to mention any, however the principal you will find, *Rom. xii. 17, 20. Recompence to no Man Evil for Evil; dearly beloved, avenge not your selves;* and *1 Pet. iii. 8, 9. Be pitiful, be courteous, not rendering Evil for Evil, nor Railing for Railing.* And that which makes this Precept very Reasonable, is this.

I. To

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1. To render Evil for Evil, is to Sin for Companies sake, or to Sin, because another Sins: We should count that Man a very strange Creature, that should make himself sick, because another Man is so, or run Distracted, because another is Mad, or Drown himself, because another is weary of his Life. The Man that doth us an Injury, Strikes, Wounds, Abuses, Reviles us, or tells Lies of us unjustly, no doubt is sick, his Soul is distemper'd, he acts below his Reason, and runs the hazard of drowning in the Gulf of Perdition, and shall we do so? He makes God angry with him, and wrongs not only us, but his own Soul too, and are these things so Beautiful, so Amiable, so Attracting, that we need be fond of them?

It's true, we are apt to flatter our selves, that what we do by Way of Return is no Injury, but a just Retribution, but these are childish Evasions; the Actions are the same, the Wrath, the Anger, the Malice, the Spight is the same, our Departure from the Rule of Vertue is the same, and therefore the Sin must be the same. So that in this Case, *the Blind leads the Blind*, and we know, what the Consequence will be, for *both will fall into the Ditch.*

2. This rendering Evil for Evil, is condemned by the very Law of Nature, which we learn best from *Heathen Philosophers*, who had no Revelation to direct them. *Aristotle* and *Cicero* indeed make it just and lawful

to revenge an Injury, or to return Evil for Evil, but the *Platonists* generally, who had a greater Insight into the Nature of Morality, and brought better Minds to the study of it, do look upon't as a thing unworthy of a good Man, and they call it falling into the same Distemper and Disorder that he is sick of, who doth the Injury. The *Pythagoreans* were of the same Mind, and look'd upon him that returned the Injury, as the worse Man of the two, because he discomposed himself for another Man's Folly, and wronged his own Innocence: And they laid it down as a Maxim, That to bite again, when we are bitten, was the Quality of a Brute, or wild Beasts, not of a good or wise Man: And if it seemed so unreasonable to meer *Heathens*, a *Christian* must be blind beyond Imagination, that in all the Light he hath, perceives not the Absurdity of it.

3. This is to invade God's Right, for *Vengeance is mine saith he, I will repay, Rom. xii. 19.* Had not God promised to revenge our Wrongs, something might be pleaded for our returning Evil for Evil. But God having taken that Province upon himself, it must be strange Injustice, and Presumption to take that Power out of his Hand, and the Man that returns Evil for Evil, doth as good as say, I will not stay till God revenges my Cause. I know not whether he will or no. It is true, he hath said he will, but I cannot be sure of it. I will take the

Oppor-

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Opportunity which offers it self, and (in despite of my Belief, that he will see me Righted) be mine own Carver. I will take that Office upon my self, which he is very slow, and loth to discharge, and I value not his Authority, and what Madneſs is this!

You'll ſay perhaps, ſince God works by Means, and makes uſe of the Magiſtrate ordinarily to revenge Mens Wrongs, I may at leaſt make uſe of that means, and complain to them to have the Offender brought to condign Punishment; But as to that, what ſoever may be lawful in greater Injuries, to be ſure in leſſer it is not; which leads me to the ſecond Propoſition.

II. *In leſſer Injuries, we are not preſently to run to the Magiſtrate to have the Offender puniſh'd.* We are not only not to revenge our ſelves in this Caſe, but we may not run to thoſe in Power, to have our Revenge that way gratified. Whereas the *Jews* upon ſuch occaſions, did run to the Magiſtrates to have the Offender puniſh'd with the Loſs of the ſame Limb or Part, in which he had injured them, *Chriſt* to lead his Followers to greater Perfection, or to let them ſee what is the true Import of the Law of Nature, commands not to reſiſt the evil Man, as the *Jews* of old did, by demanding *Eye for an Eye, &c.* and he intimates what he means by a leſſer Injury, even ſuch as *Smiting on the Cheek.*

It's true, at this Day, this is counted not only in Palaces, but in Stalls and Shops, one of the greatest Injuries, and a Box on the Ear is look'd upon as the most insufferable Thing in Nature, and some Men, if they were sure to go to Hell the next Moment, would not forbear returning the Injury, at least revenging themselves by means of the Magistrate. But mad Men are not fit Judges of the reasonableness of a Law.

That this before us is so, is evident from hence.

1. To run presently to the Magistrate in lesser Injuries, is an Argument of a very uncharitable Mind, of a Temper that will cover nothing with its softer Mantle, but is fond of exposing it's Neighbour's Nakedness. Nay, such a Temper acts the Reverse of the Qualities and Operations of true Charity, mention'd 1 *Cor.* xiii. 4, 5. for it knows not what Long-suffering means, it's Kindness goes out; it cherishes Envy, it's rash, it discovers it's Pride, it's Behaviour is unseemly, it seeks altogether her own, it is easily provoked, it thinks Evil, it rejoices in Iniquity, it believes the worst, hopes nothing, bears nothing, endures nothing, and therefore it cannot be Charity, and without this, all a Man doth is worth nothing.

2. It is a Sign of great Impatience, and that neither the Precepts nor Examples of Patience recorded in Scripture for our Admonition, do work upon us, and consequently, that we are Strangers, to bearing Tribulation;

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bulation; and a *Christian*, that knows not how to bear Tribulation, is no *Christian*. Patience is one of the Corner-stones, on which our Religion is, and must be built, and if the Foundation be destroyed, what security hath a Man, that he is one of the lively Stones whereof the Spiritual House is framed, Patience cements all the other Virtues, *Rom. v. 3, 4, 5. 2 Per. i. 6.* It keeps them together, and they do not break asunder; if that be lost, all the other Graces fall, and the Poet says, if the *Master be, Amisso, rupere fidem*; if that come to any hurt, all the rest do suffer Shipwrack.

3. By running presently to the Magistrate, in lesser Injuries, to be revenged on the Offender, we involve our selves in divers Sins; such as misrepresenting our Neighbours Faults, aggravating them beyond measure, and drawing others into the same Error, delight in other Peoples Misery, rejoicing, at their Fall, Animosity, secret Grudges, Malice, Hatred, Contempt of God, &c. So fruitful is this Sin, that out of its Belly flow divers Impure Streams, a *Trojan Horse*, that carries fatal Enemies in its Bowels, from which is nothing to be expected but Confusion and Desolation.

But this is not all, we are not only not to return Evil for Evil, not only forbear running to the Magistrate in lesser Injuries, but rather than return Evil for Evil, submit to a greater Inconvenience: Which is the

III. Pro-

III. Proposition, *Rather than return Evil for Evil, we are to endure a greater Evil. Whoever smites thee on the right Cheek, rather than serve him in his kind, rather than requite him after his way, turn to him the other also.*

That this is the Sense, is plain from hence, because neither *Christ* nor *St. Paul* did turn the other Cheek to the Person that struck them, and therefore the adversative Proposition must be understood comparatively, rather than return the Injury, suffer a greater. Indeed there are Examples in Ecclesiastical History, who according to the Letter of this Command, have turned the other Cheek to the Smiter, so did *Spiridion* they say, so did an old Hermite in *Russia*, so did *Paula*, so did *Eulogius*, so did divers Monks, if we believe the *Roman* Legends; nay, so fond were some, that rather than not have an Opportunity of fulfilling this Command literally, have provoked others to smite them on one Cheek, that they might have an Opportunity of turning to them the other also; But this was part of that excessive Righteousness, whereof *Solomon*, *Be not overmuch righteous*, *Eccles. vii. 14.* The true Meaning of this Precept, is that which I have mentioned; And the Reasonableness of this Rule will appear from hence.

i. This is the best way to overcome the Desire of Revenge. Herein lies the Mystery of a *Christians* Conquest, that we may be able to endure something that's irksome to Flesh and Blood, to endure something that

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that is more irksom, as he who had given a Shilling to a poor Man, and repined at it; to overcome that Temptation, went back and gave him two. He that can endure a greater Injury, no doubt will be able to endure a less. This is that Policy a *Christian* is to make use of to dissipate the Stratagems of the Devil; and he that applies himself to this Method of resisting revengeful Desires, hath something to bear witness, that he is become wise unto Salvation.

2. This is an excellent Sign, that we have a huge Command of our Passions and Affections. Were I to shew a *Christian* in his Beauty, I would shew him in this Dress, for *he that is slow to Anger, is better than the Mighty, and he that rules his Spirit, than he that takes a City, Prov. xvi. 32.* The mighty Men, whose Names sound big, who have filled the World with Slaughters, and made themselves Masters of Kingdoms, Cities, Towns, Countries, have still been Strangers to this Command of their Passions. This Command makes a Man a *Christian*, for they that are *Christ's*, have crucified the Flesh, with its Affections and Lusts; and no doubt, he shews, that he hath crucified all these, that rather than return Evil for Evil, endures a greater Evil.

3. This is the most likely Method, to make People admire, and fall in love with Religion, which gives Men such Power, and enables them to do what Nature, Art, and Philosophy, are not able to effect. We have

a great Instance of this, in a Case not very unlike that I speak of, in a pious Man in *India*, who preaching the Gospel to those *Barbarians*, as he stood in the Street discoursing of *Christ* crucified, an *Indian*, full of Spight and Spleen, having gathered what Filth and Nastiness he could, came up to him, and spit full in his Face: The good Man not at all concerned at the Affront, gently wiped away the Spittle, and went on in his Discourse, not moved in the least with the Injury; an Act so astonishing to that barbarous People, that abundance came in, and professed themselves Profelytes of *Christianity*. There are so few Men in this Age, that practice these stricter Precepts of our Religion, that that's one Reason why so few are converted, or become obedient to the Faith. Such extraordinary Acts of Patience under Injuries would make sensual Men stand amaz'd at the mighty Power of God in our Souls, and oblige them to yield their Members Servants of Righteousness unto Holiness.

4. From hence flows the sweetest Peace and Satisfaction, even from hence, when rather than return Evil for Evil, we are ready to suffer a greater Evil. Self-denial is the Key that unlocks the hidden Treasures of Peace and Joy in the Holy Ghost: Hence came that mighty Peace we find in the Holy Apostles, and their Followers: *St. Paul* tells us a very strange thing of himself, 2. *Cor.* vii. 4. *I am exceeding joyful*

in all our Tribulation. This looks like the greatest *Paradox*. What? rejoice in Chains, in Hunger, in Thirst, and Nakedness! What? rejoice in Dungeons, in Prisons, in Distresses by Land and by Water! Is it possible to rejoice in Persecutions, in being made the Filth and Off-scouring of the World! It had been something, if he had said with *Solomon, Eccles. ii. 4.* I am exceeding joyful because I have made me great Works, built me Houses, planted Vineyards, made me Gardens and Orchards, planted me Trees of all kind of Fruits, made me Pools of Water, to water therewith the Wood that brings forth Fruit, and gotten me Servants, and Maidens, and had Servants born in my House, and because I have great Possessions of great and small Cattle, and have gather'd Silver and Gold, and the peculiar Treasure of Kings, and have gotten me Men-Singers, and Women-Singers, &c.

These are the gaudy Things that make the Children of Men merry and joyful, but to talk of being exceeding joyful, under a very sorrowful Scene of Misery, this sounds as if the Apostle were besides himself. But no, the good Man was in his Wits, his Reason strong and lively within him, and he felt what he said. And what could be the Reason of this Joy? why it was Self-denial, and the greater the Self-denial is, the greater is the Joy; and what greater Self-denial could there be, than what he mentions, *1 Cor. iv. 12, 13.* *Being reviled*

reviled we bless, being persecuted we suffer it, being defamed we entreat, as if he had said, Rather than return Evil for Evil, we are ready to suffer a greater Evil; Men in whom Sense and Love of the World reigns, must needs be unacquainted with this Joy. But thus it is not with Persons who live by Faith in the Son of God. These both taste it and feel it, and the Reason is, because they tread in the Steps of Christ Jesus, who, when he was reviled, reviled not again, and when he suffered, he threatened not, but committed himself to him that judges righteously,
 1 Pet. ii. 23.

Inferences.

1. From these Words it doth not follow, that therefore the Office of the Magistrate is needless, or that a *Christian* cannot lawfully and conscientiously be a Magistrate. These Words of our Saviour are indeed alledged to prove it, and the Objection runs thus: If we *Christians* are to endure Injuries patiently, are not to demand Retaliation from the Magistrate, and rather than revenge ourselves, are to suffer a greater Injury; the Office of a Magistrate, which consists chiefly in revenging Wrongs and Injuries, and in returning Evil for Evil, is needless, nay dangerous, nor can a *Christian* conscientiously engage in an Office, which obliges him to act contrary to the Rule of *Christ*; for what doth the Magistrate but resist the Evil

Evil Man, and if he be not to be resisted, how can a *Christian* safely execute or discharge that Office.

I answer, That this Precept of our Saviour is given to private *Christians*, or to *Christians* in a private Capacity, and not to Magistrates, will appear from the following Particulars.

1. As *Christ* hath no occasion here to talk of Magistrates, *Christian* Magistrates, I mean, so it cannot be rationally suppos'd, that he prescribes any Law to them. The Persons he speaks to were Disciples, invested with no secular Authority; and though he speaks to all his Disciples, both those that were then, and who were to succeed them, yet he considers them still in the Capacity of *Christians*, not as they are or may be entrusted with Power and Authority for the Publick Good, which respects must necessarily require other Measures.

2. *Christ* did not come to destroy the Law, but to fulfil it; but if he had abolished the Office of Magistrates, or made it unlawful, he had destroy'd a considerable Part of the Law of *Moses*, which doth not only relate to Magistrates, but makes the Office indispensably necessary.

3. *Christ* came to explain and revive the Law of Nature, which Law requires Peace and Order in a Common-wealth; and this not being to be had without Magistrates, which may encourage those that do well, and punish the Evil-Doers; it must follow, that

that Magistrates, as Magistrates, are not concern'd in this Precept.

4. How can this *Text* be levell'd against the Power of Magistrates, when Magistrates are the Powers Ordain'd of God, and *Whoever resists that Power, resists the Ordinance of God*; *Rom. xiii. 1, 2, 3.*

5. There is no Place in all the New Testament, which forbids a *Christian* to be a Magistrate; nay, we have several Examples of Men, who were Magistrates actually, and converted to *Christianity*, and yet neither quitted, nor were they requir'd to quit that Office after their Conversion, such were *Nicodemus*, *Joseph of Arimathea*; both the *Centurions*, *Matth. viii.* and *Acts x.* and *Sergius Paulus*, the Proconsul, *Acts xiii.* even the Soldiers in *St. John the Baptist's* Time, Men who are the great Instruments of that Justice which the Magistrate sometimes executes, were not oblig'd to lay down their military Girdle, or to forsake their Station and Employment.

6. We are expressly commanded to pray for Kings, and those who are in Authority, *1 Tim. ii. 1, 2, 3.* and the Reason is given, *because God would have all Men to be saved, and come to the knowledge of the Truth*, which shews, that we are therefore to pray for Magistrates, especially if Infidels, or Idolaters, that they may be converted, and that under them we may lead quiet and peaceable Lives, in all Godliness and Honesty; which End could not be obtain'd, if im-

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diately upon their turning *Christians*, they were oblig'd to lay down, or divest themselves from their Office.

7. The Office of the Magistrate doth not at all clash or interfere with the Genius or Temper of the Gospel. For what is the Office of a Magistrate, but to make wholesome Laws for governing the People under their Power with suitable Sanctions, and to defend their Subjects from Wrong, Violence and Mischief: Neither of which Acts are contrary to our Religion, not making Laws for governing the People under their Charge; for the Gospel, as well as the Law of Nature, permits every Master of a Family to make good Orders for those over whom God hath set him; and it would be strange, if Masters of a greater Family might not have this Privilege. God even in the *New Testament* hath declar'd himself to be a God of Order, and protests against Confusion; and since without Magistrates, and Laws, and Sanctions, it would be impossible to prevent Confusion: He that allows of the End, must needs be supposed to allow of the Means conducive to that End. In a Word, without these Helps, Cities and Common-wealths would be Dens of Thieves, and Pest-Houses rather than civiliz'd Societies; nor is defending their Subjects from Wrongs and Injuries, contrary to the Nature of the Gospel, which prescribes *Justice* and *Charity*, and who sees not that the Defence of the Subject from

V

Wrongs

Wrongs and Injuries is founded upon these two Cardinal Vertues. Even inflicting Penalties upon the stubborn and obstinate, rests upon these Principles, so that the Office of the Magistrate must necessarily be lawful and commendable. I grant, were the whole World *Christian*, and did all *Christians* live up strictly to the Rules of the Gospel, there would be no Quarrels, no Dissentions, no Wrongs, no Injuries, and consequently there would be no need of Magistrates; but such a blessed State we do not look for, till we come to Heaven, and till then there must be Magistrates.

Nor doth St. Paul, 1 Cor. vi. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5. find fault with the Office of the Magistrate, but with those who upon every light occasion, quarrel'd one with another, and accused one another to the Magistrate, and particularly to the *Heathen Governors*. Nay, the Apostle is so far from condemning the Office, that he seems to advise them to erect ~~new~~ *new*, or *Tribunals of Judgment* among themselves, to decide Controversies and Quarrels betwixt Man and Man, thereby to avoid running to the *Heathen Magistrates*, whereby *Christianity* was like to become contemptible.

So that all these Particulars being laid together, since God cannot be supposed to contradict himself, this Precept of our Saviour must concern only private *Christians*, and must be intended to direct them how they are to behave themselves one toward another

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another in their Conversation, but is not level'd against the Power of Magistrates in a *Christian* Common-wealth, not but that even a Magistrate may Sin against this Precept of our Master, if private Revenge guides him in the Execution of Judgment and Justice; but where he doth the Duty of a Magistrate, out of Love to the Publick Good, there this Command cannot be suppos'd to interfere with his Power and Authority.

II. Since the Precept of the *Text* is the standing Rule whereby *Christ's* Disciples are to govern themselves, it is very necessary I should press it upon you, who came hither on purpose, not only to hear, but, I hope, to do, what the Lord your God requires of you, *viz.*

Not to return Evil for Evil.

Not to run in lesser Injuries, (such as a Blow, or smiting on the Cheek) to the Magistrate, in order to have the Offender punish'd. And,

Rather than return Evil for Evil, to suffer a greater Evil, or, a greater Injury.

But I foresee an Objection which is like to dash all that I can say, or alledge, in order to persuade you to a conscientious Observance of these Rules of Holy Living.

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*Why should you urge this, (will some say)
for the thing is impracticable ?*

Not practicable Sirs ! It's strange our great Master, in whom are all the Treasures of Wisdom and Knowledge, should prescribe a thing that is not Practicable. What, did not he know our Frames ? Was he ignorant of what our Shoulders would bear ? Did not he consider the State and Condition of our Souls ? I grant it is not practicable by Men, who will not step out of the common Road of their carnal Interest, and Lusts, and sinful Inclinations. I grant, it is not practicable by Persons who will not make use of the Means, and Motives, and Enforcives, and Helps, which God affords to raise corrupted Nature into a nobler Temper. I grant, it is not practicable by Persons who will do nothing toward their own Happiness, that will be naked, and poor, and blind, wretched and miserable, in despite of all the *Collyriums*, and Eye-salves, and Medicines, and Remedies, which are offer'd, and tender'd to them for their Cure.

But when there are a Thousand Moral Arguments before you, and the Spirit of God, and the Grace of our Lord *Jesus Christ* are ready to give Life to those Arguments in your Souls, when Heaven is willing to assist, and Omnipotence offers to help you, to raise you from the Ground, and to inspire you with Courage and Valour suitable, there to talk of the Unpracticableness of
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these Rules, is to blaspheme the Goodness of God, and with that unprofitable Servant, to accuse your Master, *That he gathers where he hath not strow'd, and reaps where he hath not sown.* What should make it unpracticable? What? because Flesh and Blood saith it is so? Is not Flesh and Blood that which you are oblig'd to fight against? What are all the Arguments that are brought against the Practicableness of it, but what are borrow'd from the Opinion of the World, because it is not customary to do so, it is not usual, or other Men do not mind it.

And are these the mighty Reasons that satisfy your Conscience? Will you dare to plead them in the last Day? Will not you blush to alledge them before the Searcher of all Hearts?

I shall be counted a Coward, saith the Man of Honour, if I put up an Affront, or do not return Evil for Evil. A wonderful Argument! an Argument which a *Philosopher* would laugh at, and a *Christian* ought to scorn. Was there ever greater Cowardice than this returning Evil for Evil? What? not dare to obey your God, whom you confess to be greater than the greatest Monarchs of the World? What? Not dare to consult the Interest and Welfare of your Souls above that of Flesh and Blood? What? Not dare to maintain a good Conscience in despite of all Opposition? What? afraid of transgressing a Punctilio of Honour, when you run the hazard of

Eternal Damnation? Is this your Courage to be Slaves to a silly Lust, and to crouch to a base Temptation of the Devil? to tremble at the Censures of Dust and Ashes, and to throw your selves headlong into the Gulph of Perdition? you'll reply, *Who saith it is so dangerous?* Why *Christ* says so, that Saviour whom you pretend to Worship and Adore; for he hath prefix'd this general Item to all the Commands in this Sermon, *Whosoever shall break one of these least Commandments, and shall teach Men so, i. e. make a practice of it, and delight in it, he shall be called least in the Kingdom of Heaven, i. e. he shall be nothing at all in that Kingdom.* And is this your Courage, not to stand by your greatest Friend? Is not *Christ* your greatest Friend? Hath not he bought you with his Blood? Hath not he laid down his Life for you, to deliver you from the Wrath to come? When you *return Evil for Evil*, you forsake this Friend, you dishonour him, you abuse him; and is it Courage not to dare to maintain the Cause of your dearest Friend? Is it not far greater Courage to subdue a Passion, than to fall under the Power and Tyranny of it? Is it not greater Courage to overcome the Evil with Good, than to be overcome with Evil? Is it not more Heroick, to assert the Honour and Glory of your Immortal Souls, than to make them Drudges and Slaves to a brutish Inclination?

Who

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Who so fit to judge of Courage and Cowardice, as God infinitely Wise and Knowing; and if he calls *returning Evil for Evil*, Cowardice, will you call it Courage, and put Darkness for Light, and Light for Darkness? Doth not he call it Cowardice, when he looks upon it as a debasing of Reason, dishonouring your Religion, wronging your Conscience, wounding your Souls, disgracing your Profession, and Disobedience to him who hath the greatest Right and Power to command you?

A Bull or a Boar can kick him again that kicks him. And what? Is there not greater Spirit in you, than there is in such pitiful Animals? *Socrates*, a Heathen; when one gave him a Box on the Ear, replied merrily, *What a strange thing is it, that a Man cannot go abroad without putting a Helmet on!* Can we read this of *Barbarians*, and look upon our selves as civiliz'd, who dare not come up to their Vertue?

Had you rather be no *Christians*, than be counted Cowards. Hath God exalted your Natures above that of irrational Creatures, and is imitating *Bears* and *Tygers*, the highest Dispensation you arrive to?

Another pleads, *My Neighbours will count me a Fool, if I should not return Evil for Evil, or rather than return an Injury, suffer a greater:* This is much such a Plea as the former; and it must be confess'd, that this is the Wisdom of the Flesh; and see here how contrary this Wisdom is to the Wisdom of

God, or to the Wisdom of the Spirit!

What is Wisdom? Is it not to chuse proper Means to attain the End? And will you take the Way to Hell, that you may get to Heaven? Is it not Wisdom to foresee the Evil, and to hide our selves from it? Hath not God declar'd his Wrath and Indignation against this *returning Evil for Evil*; and is it your Wisdom to run into the Danger? What if Men should count you Fools for minding the Business of your Calling, or providing for your Families? Would you therefore neglect doing so, because of that Censure? And how come ye to despise the Censures of Men in one Duty, and are afraid of doing it in another? Is not forbearing to return Evil for Evil, Railing for Railing, ill Language for ill Language, a Duty as much as providing for your Families? Is it not commanded as much as labouring for a Livelihood? And if to obey God more than Men be Wisdom, where lies the Folly in being obedient to the Will of God in this particular? Which is better, that God should count ye Fools, or that Men should do it? If it be better Men should have such Thought of you than God, why cannot the Determination of God make you resolute to undervalue these Nick-names of malicious Persons? God will certainly look upon you as wise Men, if you are tender of the Welfare of your Souls. And since forbearing to *return Evil for Evil* is a certain Sign that you have a
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tender Regard to the Happinefs of your Souls, what Hurt do ye receive by Mens calling you a thousand Fools? Men may be mistaken, but God cannot; and if Men call ye Fools for obeying the Gospel, most certainly they are mistaken; and will you be guided more by the inconsiderate Talk of loose, rash, and carnal Men, than by the serious Resolution of that God who is to be the Judge of Quick and Dead?

Ay, but if I do not return Evil for Evil, wicked Men will trespass upon my Goodness. And what if they do? Is our Goodness the worse, because it meets with frequent Trials? Is not this the Way to strengthen, to confirm, and to establish, and to perfect it? *Let Patience have its perfect work,* saith St. James i. 4. If Mens trespassing upon our Goodness, is subservient to the Perfection of Grace, how can we be Losers by it? Nay, doth not the wicked Man lose more by his repeated Injuries, than we by our repeated Patience? Doth not his Soul gather greater Guilt and Blackness by it, while our lasting and continu'd Patience, makes our own brighter and more splendid? And how do we know but our Patience under the first Injury may work upon the ill Man, and oblige him to become good by our Example, and fright him from attempting any more? However, it doth not, it's I that gather the Roses, and the Briars and Pricks fall to his share.

Once

Once more, Is there not a Promise made to the patient Soul, that God will stop the Rage of her Enemies ? Do we believe this Promise, and shall not we trust God for the Performance of it ? And when he is ready to perform it to our Satisfaction, shall we stop the Accomplishment by our uneasiness under the Injury ?

Ay, but still Experience shews, that this Patience under Injuries, hardens the insolent Man in his Sins. We grant it, but whose Fault is it ? not ours, but of his own impenitent Heart, which indeed deserves our Pity and our Prayers, but heaps no Guilt upon our Heads ? Surely we shall not be answerable for other Mens boldness in their Sins ; nor is our Patience a Compliance with their Folly, which is not intended to harden, but to melt them ; and if, like vitious Stomachs, they turn that into Corruption, which was intended for their Nourishment, they feed indeed, but not like *Bees*, that gather Honey from the Flowers they suck ; but like *Toads* and *Vipers*, that convert the Juice of wholesome Herbs into Poyson. But is this an Argument that I must therefore inflame my Soul with Wrath and Revenge, because the other swells with Venom ?

So that all these Objections vanish ; and that which seem'd impossible, appears, if view'd without these false Glasses, very practicable. No doubt it is so, and may be made very easie too ; and if you ask me
how ?

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how? the following Rules will give you satisfaction.

1. *By admiring the Praise of God, above the Praise of Men.* It is recorded to the eternal Shame and Disgrace of those chief Men and Rulers among the *Jews*, who believed in *Christ*, yet durst not confess him; Cowards as they were, that *they loved the Praise of Men more than the Praise of God*, Joh. xii. 48. Men in great Places and Dignities, this is their Temper; this is the Rule they go by; let God praise and commend a Vertue never so much, if it meet not with the same Applause among Men: If Men do count it disagreeable to the Punctilio's of Honour, and the Air of the Court, and the Humour of the Age; or if it be not good Manners, they carefully shun it; and to be sure, such Men will never come up to the Rule of the *Text*.

But he that comes to a fixt and steady Resolution of esteeming the Praise of God above the Praise of Men, that's the Person who is like to triumph over all the Desires of Revenge.

And, O God! why should not we esteem thy Praise, thy Commendations and Approbations beyond the Applauses of mortal Men! Are not thy Commendations most rational, most weighty, most unbiass'd, most true, and most durable; Whereas those of poor Mortals, how partial are they? how subject to Mistakes? how uncertain, how weak, how transitory, how short, and
how

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how unprofitable in that Day, when God shall judge the World in Righteousness!

He that esteems the Praise of God more than the Praise of Men, doth not only act like a true *Philosopher*, but hath this satisfaction in himself, that he lives by Faith, and not by Sight, and will be able to laugh when others shall howl in outward Darkness; so true is that Saying of the Apostle, 2 Cor. x. 18. *Not he who commends himself, and we may add, Not he whom Men commend, is approv'd, but whom the Lord commends.*

2. By a firm Perswasion, that without this Patience under Evil, or Injuries, or Affronts, or reviling Language, we cannot be, and are no Christians; I say, by a firm Perswasion, for most Men have general, slight, and imperfect Ideas and Notions of the thing, but that will do no good. A firm Perswasion is, convincing our selves thoroughly, by suitable, powerful Arguments, that we bear the Name of *Christians* in vain, and play with it, and make a meer Formality of it, except we heartily comply with our Master's Will in this particular. And if the Soul be impregnated with this Principle, and hath a brisk and lusty Sense of it, the Danger, or rather, the Thoughts of it, will work thro' all Obstacles and Impediments, and we shall make a shift to resist the importunate Desires of Flesh and Blood, which tempts us to return Evil for Evil.

3. By

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3. *By fixing the Eyes of our Understandings upon the future Reward and Recompence.* This is the great Engine whereby our base, slavish, and worldly Fears must be removed; and till we have lively Apprehensions of that Reward, and are concern'd about it, like Men in danger of losing the greatest Blessing? the Opinions and Censures of the World will prevail more with us, than all that *Christ* or any Apostle can say.

Till a Man doth more vehemently desire to be happy in the other World than in this, the Vertues which go against the Interest of Flesh and Blood will move very heavily; and so will Patience under Affronts and Injuries: But the Soul being chafed and heated with brisk and lively Thoughts of that heavenly Country, and walking thro' that holy City which is Above, and viewing the Towers and Bulwarks of it, will break out into Holy Flames, which will consume and burn up the Hay, and Straw, and Stubble of carnal Reasons, and false Suggestions of the Flesh and the Devil, and frown the Motions of Revenge into Exile.

4. *By quickning and raising our Love to God, into more than ordinary servours.* Love dares do any thing, I mean, Love that hath Fire in't, and burns clear upon the Altar of the Heart. The great Reason, why you dare not venture upon these harder Lessons is, because your Love to God is weak and faint, and like that of green Wood, apt to
ex-

expire. The Soul that sets God before her in all his Beauty, and Glory, and Mercy, and Rewards and Promises, till she loves him beyond what the Eye doth see, and the Hands can handle, gets the Victory, and this very Command will not seem grievous to her. Love made the Lord *Jesus* give his Back to the Smiter; and Love will make you give the other Cheek to the Striker; Love will make you even rejoice, that you have something to lose for God; and that you can do something that inclines his Favour to you. Love will carry you above all the little Lime-Twigs which are apt to catch and entangle your Souls. Love will charm your Passions, tie up your Tongues, and hold your Hands, that you will not dare to return Evil for Evil.

5. *Examples are encouraging things.* And have not we very illustrious Examples of this Patience under Affronts and Injuries, in *Moses*, *David*, *St. Paul*, and of other Apostles and Believers? Why should not we do as they did? Why should not we free and extricate our selves from the Snares of the World, and press toward the Mark as well as they? Was the Way they walk'd in good and safe, and shall we be afraid to tread in their Steps? Did they understand the Will of God, and can we follow better Patterns? We all conclude they were saved by doing as *Christ* directs in the Text, and shall we be fond of finding out a new Way to Salvation? It's true, they were de-
rid

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rided by the World for so doing; but have they lost any thing by the Bargain? If they have been Gainers, why should not we venture upon the Reproach of *Christ* as well as they? Did they thrive and prosper, and do well in the End, and arrive safe in the Harbour of eternal Rest, and can we do amiss, if we transcribe their Patience in our Lives and Conversations?

6. *By importunate Addresses to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.* God will be importun'd, and that Importunity shews we are in good earnest. Let's but beg and implore the Grace of God, as a hungry and thirsty Man doth beg for Meat and Drink, and try whether God will not open the Windows of Heaven, and fill our Souls with Food convenient, with Grace, I mean, sufficient for our purpose. God cannot deny himself, and having promised his Spirit upon our strong and vehement Cries, he will hear and answer, and grant us our Heart's Desire, and the Requests of our Lips; and the Breath of Life will enter into us, even the Spirit of Courage and Wisdom, which will throw down all Imaginations, that exalt themselves against the Obedience of *Christ Jesus*, and we shall be able to do what he did, and bear what he bore, according to the working whereby he is able to subdue all things to himself; to whom be Glory for ever.

S E R-

SERMON XXXII.

St. Matth. Ch. V. Ver. 40, 41.

*And if any Man will sue thee at the Law,
and take away thy Coat, let him have
thy Cloak also.*

*And whosoever shall compel thee to go a
Mile, go with him tmain.*

IN these Words our Saviour prosecutes the Task he had begun in the foregoing Verse and continues pressing the great Doctrine of *Christianity*, or not returning Evil for Evil. And as in the Words preceding he told us, how we may arrive to a Habit of Patience under Injuries, even by suffering a greater Injury; so he now illustrates what he had said by two Instances more. *And if any Man will sue thee at the Law, &c.*

The Precepts here given are so directly contrary to the Humour of the Age we live in, that if a Man was to measure Religion
X by

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by the modern Practice, he could infer, or conclude no less, than that either no such Precepts were ever given, or that Men have ceas'd to be *Christians*. This makes me often admire the good Providence of God, that hath preserv'd us these Oracles in Writing; for had they been left to Tradition, and to Conveyance by Word of Mouth, most certainly Man, (after the first Fervour and Piety had been over) would have wilfully forgotten these Lessons, so contrary to the Dictates of Flesh and Blood; and we shou'd not have known whether any such Commands had ever been given by our Saviour.

But whatever Contrariety there may be between these Rules, and our carnal Inclinations and Appetites, it's rational to conceive, that *Christ* would never have commanded all this, if he had not intended it should be put in execution: And therefore it is impossible that a Person should have any solid Assurance that he is a true *Christian*, who doth not heartily endeavour to bring his Mind and Will to submit, in these Particulars, to the Will of *Christ*. It's true, a *Christian* may not every Day have occasion to exercise this Piece of Self-denial, because the same Temptations recur not every Day; but when he hath, he must let his Neighbour see, that the Grace of God, like Oyl, swims on the top, and is not to be master'd by the false Suggestions of the Flesh and of the Devil.

There

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There are three Sorts of Injuries *Christ* mentions here, in all which the same Rule is to be observ'd.

1. The first, that which is offer'd to the Body of a *Christian* in the preceding Verse, which I have already explain'd. *He that shall smite thee on the right Cheek, turn to him the other also.*

2. That which is offer'd to his Property and Estate.

3. That which is offer'd to his Liberty. The Injuries levell'd against our Estates and Liberty, are comprehended in the Words I have read unto you. *And if any Man will sue thee at the Law, or if any Man will by Force take away thy Coat, (the Word *accidit* implies both) let him have thy Cloak also. And, whosoever shall compel thee to go a Mile, go with him twain.* Two things must here be premised, for the better understanding of the Words.

1. That (like those of the preceding Verse) they are levell'd against private Revenge, and must be construed to the same Sense. *If any Man will sue thee at the Law, and take away thy Coat, rather than quarrel with him, or cherish any Desire of Revenge, rather than sue him again the first opportunity, for something of the same Nature, let him have thy Cloak also. And whosoever shall compel thee to go a Mile, rather than fall out with him, or put thy self into a Fit of Rage and Revenge; rather than oppose Force to Force, and take the same Advan-*

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tage against him when stronger than he, *go with him twain.* So that these two Commands, (as well as the former) are Directions and Insinuations how we are to overcome our revengeful Desires; and those violent Passions we are apt to run into, when any Injury or Wrong is offer'd to us, *i. e.* by suffering more.

2. These Precepts are to be confin'd, (as much as can be) to the Instances here given, and to things that are parallel with them; not stretch'd to Things of a higher Nature, *i. e.* what is said here of not going to Law, must be understood of not going to Law about a *Coat or Cloak*, or Things like them; but must not be presently accommodated to higher Concerns. And what is said of forcing a Man to *go a Mile*, and *going with him twain*, rather than oppose Force to Force, must be kept within those Limits, not extended to *ten, twenty, or thirty Miles.*

These two Observations being premised, I shall speak distinctly of the two Commands; of the first more largely, of the other in fewer Words, being only an Appendix to the former. And as to the

First, *If any Man will sue thee at the Law, and take away thy Coat, let him have thy Cloak also.* And here I shall

I. *Enquire into the Reasons of the Precept.*

II. *Whether it be permitted in any Case to go to Law, or to defend ones self by Law.*

III. *If*

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III. *If it be lawful, in some Cases, what Rules are to be observ'd in the Management of it.*

1. *The Reasonableness of this Precept. And if any Man will sue thee at the Law, and take away thy Coat, let, &c.*

1. This is an excellent Way to preserve Peace and Charity; the Fewel being taken away, the Fire must go out; the Occasion of the Contention being removed, not only by giving freely the *Coat*, but by adding the *Cloak* too, the Quarrel must cease. And as one said, *An Ounce of Peace and Charity is worth a Pound of Victory.* For Peace is so lovely and amiable a thing, that we are oblig'd to promote it by all means, 2 *Thess.* iii. 16. *i. e. by all lawful means*; and surely, deceding from our Right is a lawful Means. It's true, in some Cases, by quitting our Right, we prejudice the Right of others; but this cannot be said of so small a thing as a *Coat*, (which is a Man's own to a Proverb) or a *Cloak*, or something like it.

2. This is to shew a good Example to others, and to teach them what they should do. Our Actions are the best School-Masters, and as we see Men learn from ill Example, so they may, (I am sure ought to) learn from good ones. By not hearkening to a Temptation of Injustice, by not defrauding a Child, or ignorant Person, by not speaking Evil of him that speaks ill of me, by being Conscientious in my Duty,

I teach another, and direct him how he is to govern himself. This was the Method our great Master took; He taught nothing but what he practis'd himself. And indeed, all the Oratory which a Man uses to another to persuade him to a Virtue, is insignificant, except his own Conscientiousness in the thing leads the way. He that would *sue us at Law for our Coat*, if rather than fall into a Passion with him, we *let him have our Cloak too*, we instruct him how he is to behave himself to others, if the like should happen to him. It's true, he may not be so considerate, as to learn his Duty from our Example; yet still our Intention in the Self-denial was good and commendable, and shall not go without a Recompence; and the Person who would not learn his Duty from what he saw in us, shall give an Account to God for his Untractableness and In-docility.

3. This is an excellent way to prevent great Vexation both in our selves and others. The Rage of the Enemy will not only be restrain'd by it, but hereby our own quiet and ease will be promoted. To fill our Souls with Rage and Disorder, upon such a force offer'd to us, is to punish our selves for another Man's Weakness and Folly, and to increase the Trouble and Affliction which befalls us. The loss of the *Cloak* or *Coat* was outward only; but if together with that loss, I join the loss of quietness and calmness of Mind, I increase it, and be-
come

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come my own Tormentor; and to the Injury that another doth me, I add doing Injury to my self, which is highly Irrational.

4. Hereby we do certainly glorifie God, who is ever best glorified by our Obedience, and conforming to his Will. Whatever the Loss or Inconvenience may be that may happen to us upon the account of that Obedience. This is *to glorifie him in our Souls and Bodies*, according to the Rule, 1 Cor. vi. 20. *i. e.* in our Thoughts and Actions. For this is a manifest Sign, that my Spirit stands in awe of the Supream Being, that his Law is in my Heart, and that my Mind is govern'd by his Will. By resigning actually my *Cloak* to him that would take away my *Coat*, here is an Action that brings Glory to God, and declares that God is in me, and gives me Strength and Power to overcome the Flesh, and the sinful Motions of it. And from hence arise not only *Thanksgivings* in my self, but all good Men who see it will glorifie God for my *professed Subjection to the Gospel of Christ*, 2 Cor. ix. 12, 13.

5. And this must needs endear God to us, and move him to have kind Thoughts of us. Not that we deserve his Love by such an Act, but so gracious and condescending he is, that upon decessions from our Right, for his Honour and Glory, he is willing to look upon us with a very favourable Aspect. This is Goodness that hath some Substance in it. This looks like imitation

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of his Goodness, who in his Dispensations decedes infinitely from his own Right, for our good. What was the giving of his Son, but a miraculous deceding from his own Right of punishing us according to our Deserts? And indeed, there is not an Act of Mercy to poor Sinners, but God decedes from his Right, even from the Right of his Justice. And when he who parts with his *Cloak* to him that would by force of Law deprive him of his *Coat*, doth express the Goodness of God in so lively a manner, that God, (so great in Goodness) cannot but say, as he did to his People under *Nebuchadnezzar*, *Jer. xxix. 11. I know the thoughts that I think towards you, thoughts of Peace, and not of Evil.* But you will say, may not a Man go to Law, for his own, and may not a Man justly defend himself by Law, when he is wrong'd by another? Which leads me to the.

II. Query, *Whether it be in no Case lawful for a Christian to go to Law with his Brother, to defend his Right by Law, when wrong'd by another Man?*

I. It is certain, that human Laws permit a great many things, which a pious *Christian* cannot in Conscience make use of; and which do not become him, as he is a profess'd Disciple of such an humble self-denying Master as *Christ Jesus*.

Human Laws, to prevent greater Evils in a Common-wealth, permit several things which a *Christian* who is chiefly to be guided by

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by the Law of *Christ*, doth wave, as having a greater Law in his Heart. And therefore, though Human Laws, or the Laws of the Land, permit you to go to Law with a Man that wrongs you, yet that's not the strict Measure of your Actions. Not that a *Christian* can safely disobey the Laws of the Land he inhabits, when they do not clash with the Law of God: But there is a great difference betwixt disobeying the Law of the Land, and not making use of it upon all occasions.

2. Our Saviour consider'd, and all reasonable Men must grant it, what Wrath, what Malice, what Abusing, Slandering, Disparaging of our Neighbours, what Partiality, what base Arts, what Tricks are made use of by Persons who implead one another. How Law-Suits are prolong'd to the loss of our Time, and Quiet, and better Employments? What needless Charges Men involve themselves in to their own Vexation and Discontent? And what a lasting Hatred is settled in the Hearts of Antagonists by such Doings? And therefore, to prevent the occasions of Evil, he forbids going to Law. And that Person that takes no care to shun the occasions of Evil, can never be fit for the Kingdom of God. So that.

3. In lesser Injuries, such as Mens taking, or offering to take from us by force, a *Cloak*, or upper Garment, a thing which we can spare without any great Damage to our selves?

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selves; he doth absolutely forbid this Remedy, which is indeed more than the Disease. Infomuch, that he who delights in going to Law upon every trifling occasion, a small Sum of Money, or a thing amounting to the value of a *Cloak* or *Coat*, most certainly knows not, understands not the Principles of that Religion he professes; but acts against them, and hath no Sense of the Love of *Christ Jesus* bore to him; and which ought to constrain him to forbear any thing he hath forbid.

4. Going to Law in any Case is forbid, and unlawful, if Desires of Revenge lie at the bottom of the Suit. To revenge our selves is absolutely unlawful, and let the Concern be never so great, if it be upon the account of Revenge, that Revenge impoisons the Cause, though good in it self; and in a conscientious Man stops, and must put a stop to his Proceedings. I grant that Revenge in such Law-Suits is seldom the only Cause, there being other Reasons, and those perhaps lawful, intermixt with the revengeful Desire; so in the Crowd of Reasons, Revenge is not taken notice of; which makes Men flatter themselves, that it is not Revenge that puts them upon the Process. Yet where Revenge is the principal Motive, whatever lesser Motive may mix with the Design, the Law-Suit becomes unlawful, not before Men, but before God; for the Command is exprefs and peremptory; *Avenge not your selves*; Rom. 12, 19.

And

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And yet after all, strict as this Precept is, it doth not forbid going to Law in all cases whatsoever, which brings in the.

III. Query. *If it be lawful in some Cases, what those Cases are ; and what Rules are to be observ'd in the management of it ?*

1. That there are Cases in which it may be lawful to go to Law, is evident from hence, because the Precept speaks only of lesser Injuries ; and therefore it naturally follows, that in greater Concerns it may be lawful.

2. The Cases in which it may be lawful are such, upon which either our own, or another Persons livelihood depends ; particularly where *Orphans* and *Widows* are wrong'd and abus'd ; or the poor robb'd and depriv'd of their due ; or where the neglect may inevitably involve the ruine of our Families and Relations, or hinder us from doing that good in the World we might and would do. These are Cases of great Weight and Concernment. For though the Apostle saith, 1 Cor. vi. 7. *Now therefore there is utterly a fault among you, because ye go to Law one with another, why do ye not rather take wrong ? Why do you dot rather suffer your selves to be defrauded.* Yet this must necessarily be understood, either of smaller Matters, about which they went to Law ; or of their going to Law before *Heathens* and *Unbelievers* ; or of Personal Wrongs, when none was Hurt but the Person himself by the Injury. In all which Cases,

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Cases, much is to be said for Abstinence from Law-Suits. Yet,

3. When the Cause is great and weighty, and will warrant our going to Law, a *Christian* is bound in Conscience to try whether the Controversie may not be decided by Reference, by referring it to wise and impartial Men, who may judge between Brother and Brother, as St. Paul expressly enjoins, 1 Cor. vi. 5. Going to Law must be look'd upon as some high chymical Medicines, never to be used but in very desperate Cases, when all other Remedies fail. And even then, a *Christian* is to walk very circumspectly, that his Footsteps do not slide. For,

4. Love of Justice must be the principal Motive; a Desire and Care that neither we, nor our Fellow *Christians* may be wrong'd; that each may be deliver'd from Mistakes, and from harbouring hard Thoughts one of another. Here neither Revenge, nor Vain-Glory, nor Humour, must be an Ingredient; but pure Affection to Righteousness, and an honest Mind, and sincere Endeavour to do to others as we would have others do unto us, Mat. vii. 12.

5. In the Prosecution of such a Law-Suit, the Offices of *Christian* Love and Charity must be inviolably maintain'd. If that Bond of Peace be dissolv'd by the Suit, the Law-Suit becomes unlawful. If Tricks, and little Arts, and under-hand Doings, and dealing Treacherously, or Fraud, or Deceit, or

or Lying, or suborning of Witnesses, or any such unhandsome Practices intervene, and mix with the Process on either Side, the Process becomes sinful and unchristian, and God is offended; and this is *drawing Iniquity with Cords of Vanity*, Isa. v. 18. So that in such Law-Suits, even then when the Weight and Importance of the Matter makes them lawful, the Exhortation of the Apostle must take place, *Let brotherly Love continue*, Heb. xiii. 1.

6. After all this, the Party that loses the Suit must watch against Discontent, Vexation, Animosity, and Fretting, and *worldly Sorrow*, for that *worketh Death*, 2 Cor. vii. 10. much less must the Loser commence the Law-Suit afresh, except the Case be very extraordinary; for this discovers a quarrelsome, worldly, carnal Temper of Mind, and opens a Gap to fresh Quarrels, and Divisions, and Disagreements, which a *Christian* that is Conscientious, cannot but think himself oblig'd to avoid; if he remembers how the Apostle adjures him, by the Mercies of God, above all things, *to put on Charity, which is the Bond of Perfection*, Col. iii. 14.

With these Limitations and Circumscriptions, this dangerous Meat may be made not only palatable, but wholesome. But if any think that the strict Observance of these Rules is a thing impossible; in that Case, the best Advice that can be given is, *Not to go to Law at all*; which is the surest Side of the

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the Hedge. For as going to Law hath abundance of Difficulties and Dangers in it, so to be sure he sins not, that wholly abstains from Law-Suits. This the *Primitive Christians* consider'd; and therefore *Athenagoras* tells us, their Custom was, not to go to Law with any that had taken any thing from them, and the very *Heathens* have commended it. And now I proceed to the

Second Precept, *Whosoever shall compel thee to go a Mile, go with him twain.*

Having said so much to the first Case, I shall need to say but very little to this. I shall only hint to you the reasonableness of this Precept also.

1. This is an excellent Way of making a Friend of an Enemy, such Officiousness is very charming; and if there be the least Spark of good Nature left in him, this extraordinary Civility will blow the Coals, and turn it into the Fire of Amity and Kindness. Whether it hath this effect upon a turbulent Temper or no, its Tendency is to make a better Man of him. And what should not a good *Christian* do, to convert a Sinner from the Error of his Ways? This is a very likely Means, and consequently ought to be used; and being a Means of God's prescribing, we have the greater reason to hope for good Success.

2. Walk

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2. Walking with such a Person another Mile, may administer occasion for good and pious Discourses, which may have a very good effect upon a rough and stubborn Temper; especially if the excellent Temper of *Christianity* be represented to him. How kind, how civil, how obliging it makes a Man; how it takes away from him all sower-ness of Spirit, and teaches him to do Good for Evil, and to win Men by Kindnesses. We know pious Discourses have wrought sometimes upon Men strangely untractable; and who knows, but upon such a Man, that shall compel us to go with him a Mile, such Discourses may make a very great Alteration to the saving of his Soul?

All that I shall say, by way of Application, shall be only these *Items*.

1. We use various Masters to teach our Children Civility, and to instruct them how to behave themselves in Company. Let us teach them true *Christianity*, and that will make them Civil, Courteous, Obliging, Friendly, and Affable, beyond all that Dancing-Masters, and Masters of Ceremonies can teach them; such Masters may teach them to dissemble, to flatter, to observe the Punctilio's of State and Honour; but *Christianity* will make them sincerely obliging, and kind, and modest, and friendly, and instill into them the best Behaviour and Deportment.

2. All

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2. All that *Christ* aims at in these Commands is, *to overcome the Evil with Good*; himself did so: He healed the Ear of *Malchus*, and fed his Enemies with Miracles of Mercy; to the *Jews*, who hated him, he was a mighty Benefactor; and though they sought his Death, yet he purged their Country from Sins and Devils. Whatever Injuries are offer'd us, either in our Name, or Goods, or Liberty, let us ever remember what our Master hath done before us, and say, *I am a Christian*, and I must *overcome Evil with Good*.

3. If we mean to live up to the Rules here prescrib'd, let us raise our Hearts into a vehement Desire to imitate *Christ* in his Sufferings. *St. Paul* was fond of this, and why should not we? That the Apostle was earnestly desirous after a Fellowship in *Christ's* Sufferings, you may read, *Phil. iii. 10.* and till we get such a vehement Desire, these excellent Precepts, of the Text, will seem strange, impertinent Things to us. Look unto the Sufferings of *Christ*, and be enamour'd with him, and firmly believe that Immortality that *Christ* hath brought to light; and then the Difficulty which seems to be in those Commands will vanish. I conclude therefore with *2 Tim. ii. 11, 12.* *It is a faithful Saying, if we be dead with him, we shall also live with him; if we suffer, we shall also reign with him.*

S E R;

SERMON XXXIII.

St. Matth. Ch. V. Ver. 42.

Give to him that asketh thee ; and from him that would borrow of thee, turn not thou away.

THIS Precept of our Master looks as if we were commanded to undo our selves, to ruin our Families, and to make our selves Beggars, especially if it be compared with St. Luke, Ch. vi. 30. where it is, *Give to every Man that asketh of thee.*

At this rate, some will say, we may give all away, for there will not be wanting Men and People that will ask ; and if once it be known, that we are conscientious, and act according to this Principle, our Doors will soon be crowded with People that shall ask, and borrow all we have.

In so wicked an Age, where People make no Conscience of repaying what they borrow, what can a Man expect but Beggary.

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gary and Poverty, if he must deny none that will borrow of him? and at this rate none would be happier than those who have nothing to lend or to give; because by this means they would escape, which others cannot, even Mens Importunities.

But as great a *Paradox* as this may seem to be, it will appear from the Sequel, that there is nothing but Reason and Equity in it.

The Rule here laid down, consisting of two Parts, I shall divide and consider,

I. *The Duty of Giving.*

II. *That of Lending.*

I. *Of Giving.* Give to him that asketh of thee.

Before I come to open the Nature of this Duty, I must premise,

1. We are not to think, that we are to give at no time but when we are asked. There may be very good *Christians*, whose Necessities we know, or upon Enquiry may know, and who are loath to make them known; in which Case we are oblig'd to prevent their asking, as *Christ* did the Man who had been Weak and Lame eight and thirty Years, *Wilt thou be made whole*, said he, *John v. 6.* before he knew *Christ* intended him any Kindness.

Giving is a God-like thing. God is the great Giver of every good and perfect Gift, *James i. 17.* And he ordinarily gives before

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fore we ask, and showers down his Blessings before our Requests knock at the Gate of Mercy. And they must know nothing of *Christianity*, that do not know their Profession obliges them to imitate their Father which is in Heaven.

2. This Command, *to give to him that asketh us*, must be compared with other Precepts, and explained by them; for this is a standing Rule of Interpretation, *to compare spiritual Things with spiritual*, 1 Cor. ii. 13. for we must ever suppose, that God cannot contradict himself; the whole Scripture being given by the same Spirit; this Spirit ever speaks things consistent with himself; and therefore, if there be an Expression in one Place that sounds harsh, it must be soften'd and explain'd by another, in which there is no Obscurity, no Metaphor, no Allegory; and accordingly, if we compare this Saying of our Saviour, with that we read, 2 *Theff.* iii. 10. *If any will not work, neither shall he eat*, it will soon appear, that this Precept doth not oblige us to give to them who ask, if idle and lazy, and able to work, and will not; or spend what they get in riotous Living; and of this Sort are many common Beggars, who are strong, and vigorous, and of Ability to work with their own Hands, and to whom to give, is to encourage them in Idleness.

This being premised, I shall now consider the Import of this Command, and it's briefly this,

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In general. It is to teach us, not to be Churlish, or Covetous, or Ill-natur'd, or Hard-hearted to the Needy. It is intended to pull down that base, earthly, and worldly Temper, which makes us selfish and unconcern'd about the Affliction of *Joseph*; *Nabal-like, Shall I take my Bread, and my Water, and my Flesh, that I have killed for my Shearers, and give it unto Men whom I know not whence they be, 1 Sam. xxv. 11.* It is to oblige us to hearken to the Complaints of the Necessitous, to give attention to their Cry, to hear patiently what they have to say, not to turn away from them in a proud, haughty, and undecent manner, as if their Requests were not worthy of our Regard, or as if we were too good to stand talking with such contemptible Persons; or as if it were below our Rank, and Quality, and Station, to consider what Persons, under such low Circumstances, propose to our charitable Consideration. For suppose it were impertinent, yet it is part of *Christian* Patience, to shew our selves gentle and courteous, even to a weak and silly Petitioner; not to mention, that it is a Piece of Gratitude to God, to bear with such, it being an Acknowledgment of his Goodness, which hath given us a greater Portion of Reason and Understanding, than to them.

That which is particularly enjoined here is,

1. To

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1. To give chearfully, for as we all know *God loves a chearful Giver*, 2 Cor. ix. 7. To give grudgingly or unwillingly, or by force, or in Anger and Passion, is a Worm that spoils the Gift, and makes that which in another Dress would have been a sweet Odour, a very unacceptable Sacrifice; for though the needy Brother be actually reliev'd by the Gift, yet the Giver can enjoy but little Comfort of it, since that which should have made it amiable and pleasing to God is wanting. God doth not so much regard what we give, as with what Heart we give. A ready Mind, like a magnifying Glass, makes even a Cup of Water, given to a Disciple of *Christ*, look great in the Sight of God; whereas a richer Donative, coming from us with an unwilling Mind, looks mean and pitiful, and like Objects seen thro' the wrong end of a Perspective, dwarfish and inconsiderable.

2. Give with Simplicity, with holy, good, and warrantable Ends, and with pious Intentions. This is the Command, *Rom. xii. 8.* and we shall soon be convinc'd of the Necessity of it, if we consider how it fared with the *Pharisees*, whose sinister Ends and Designs in giving Alms, drew upon them the Threatning *Christ* speaks of, *Matth. vi. 2.* *Verily they have their Reward.* To glorifie God with the Gift, to express our Gratitude to the Donor of all we have, to testify our Compassion to our Fellow-Creatures, and Fellow-*Christians* in Distress, to discharge

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our Duty, and to express our Obedience to the Commands of our Master, &c. These are Ends good and laudable, and which a good Man may take satisfaction in; and I doubt not but we may lawfully have an Eye to the future Recompence in the Resurrection of the Just, as we may conclude from what *Christ* saith, *Luke* xiv. 1, 2, 4. But to think to cajole the Almighty by the Gift, and lull him into Connivance at the Sins we are unwilling to part with, or to hope for some temporal Advantage by the Donation, or to be able to give no better Reason for our Giving, than because Persons of our Rank and Quality have done the like; Such Designs as they, are inconsistent with the Maxims of our Religion, so its needless to tell you, they must be laid aside, when the meanest Capacity may easily conclude so much from the Premises.

3. Give with Discretion: This is requir'd, *Psal.* xli. 1. where we read, *Blessed is he that considereth the Poor.* In the Original it's *משכיל* which imports Wisdom and Discretion in the Distribution of our charitable Gifts, Mens Necessities being various, some more urging, others more tolerable: Some are in greater Want than others; the Rank, and Quality, and Station of some makes them greater Objects than those who were born to a poor and mean Condition; some grow providentially Poor, others through Debauchery and Idleness; some with their Poverty are Sincere, and
Good,

Good, and Religious, others retain their Insensibleness of Things spiritual. Sometimes our very Parents and nearest Relations crave our Assistance, as well as Persons recommended to us by our Friends and Acquaintance. All which Circumstances require Direction and Prudence; which Vertue, though it be sometime made a Cloak for Covetousness, yet is a Vertue still, and to be practis'd by the best of Men, though it be made a Shelter under which wicked Men hide their Sin and Hypocrisie.

4. Give proportionably. Where God hath given much, remember to give much too, and let not Selfishness tempt you to call that little, which all your Neighbours and understanding Men count a very large Portion. And that you may be able to give much, abate abundance of Things which are superfluous, and serve for nothing but to feed your Luxury. It's impossible, that he who hath much, should give much, if he be resolv'd to have every Thing that the Men of the World have, even all the Fineries, and Gaudies, and Pomp, and Retinue, and State, which other voluptuous Sinners rejoice in. If every one of us be to *lay up in store for charitable Uses, as God hath prospered and blessed him in this World,* as we read, 1 Cor. xvi. 1, 2. Certainly we cannot satisfy our selves, that we give as we ought, if we give not proportionably. And the best Guide to direct us in this proportion is Love. The more

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fervent our Love is to our distressed Brethren, the more liberal we shall be. See how Love wrought upon the *Macedonians*, for they went not only *beyond proportion*, but *beyond their power too*, in giving relief to the Churches of *Judea*, 2 Cor. viii. 1.

5. Give to all Sorts, not only to a *Christian*, but to a *Heathen* too, as there is occasion; not only to a needy Relation, but to a distressed Stranger too; not only to a Friend, but even to an Enemy. The *Jews* were abominably partial in their giving; to a *Jew*, one of their own Nation and Religion, they were liberal, but a *Samaritan* they thought no proper Object of relief; and therefore would not do the common Offices of Humanity to them, or shew them the least Civility. Our Religion rests upon better Principles, and another Temper is requir'd of *Christians*. And that's the true Import of that Command, *Luke vi. 30. Give to every Man*, or to all *that ask of thee*, i. e. to all Sorts of Men; confine not thy Charity to Persons of the same Faith, and Party, and Opinion, but like God, disperse and scatter thy Profits on all, both Good and Bad, whether Just or Unjust, and do not deny thy Help, no not to Sinners and *Publicans*.

These, without all peradventure, are the true Qualifications of Giving, but we are not to think, that all the Duty requir'd here is incumbent on the Giver. He that doth ask is to observe Rules, as well as the Giver,

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ver, which, if he doth not, he makes himself incapable of receiving the Gift of the Giver.

1. Give to him that asketh of thee, and is a proper Object of Charity. Of this a Hint was given before; and if any necessitous Persons are excluded from being Objects, they must be such as spend what is given them in Rioting and Drunkenness, in Idleness and Laziness, and live useless and unprofitable in the World. I know abundance of Covetous, Niggardly, and Narrow-hearted *Christians* make this an Excuse, and rashly censure all that ask of them, as People idle, and delighting in the common Vices of the Age, that they may have some Colour for their Backwardness in giving; but in Cases of this Nature, we are not to go by Guesses, and Fancies, and precarious Imaginations, but by our certain Knowledge; and when we are ignorant of the Maner and Particulars of their Lives and Conversations, our Judgment must be charitable and favourable; where Experience, and common Fame, and rational Evidences do convince us of their dissolute Way of Living, we may lawfully with-hold our Hands; for in this Case we do not *with-hold the Good from those to whom it is due*, Prov. iii. 27. the Persons we speak of falling under another Notion, even of Men, to whom Correction, and Punishment, and the Severity of a Prison is due; and whom to lash into better Manners, is a very good Act of Charity.

2. Give

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3. Give to him that asketh, provided he doth ask modestly. We are not by this Precept bound to satisfy the unreasonable Desires of Men. It's true, a Pound may be too little for an *Alexander* to give, but a Talent, on the other side, may be too much for a needy Person to ask. Our Saviour here doth not determine the Quantity, how much we are to give, nor oblige us to give whatsoever another asks, but leaves the Quantity to our Prudence and Direction. In giving to him that asketh, we are to consider our Ability, as well as the Merit and Need of him that doth ask; and so to Give, as not to be unjust to others, nor to wrong those whom by Nature we are bound to do good to in the first Place; the Neglect or Omission of which makes us *Infidels*, *1 Tim.* v. 8. And so much of Giving.

II. The second Branch of our Saviour's Counsel is Lending, *From him that would borrow of thee, turn not thou away.*

The general Drift of which Counsel is, for the most part, or ordinarily, to lend our Neighbour such Things as he stands in need of. Most Commands of this Nature have respect to what ought to be the ordinary Practice, supposing still there may be extraordinary Cases, wherein the Thing may lawfully be superseded, or suspended. A loose debauch'd Person, or a Person who I know will pervert the Thing I lend him, or
he

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he would borrow of me to very ill use, This Law doth not oblige me to lend him. But for the most part between Neighbour and Neighbour, this ought to be the Rule. And the same may be said of a Person apparently dishonest, whose Actions make us justly suspect, or give us just occasion to believe, that he intends not to repay us again. I cannot think that such Persons come into the Number of the Borrowers *Christ* aims at: For no doubt our Saviour ties the Borrower to Honesty, as well as the Lender to Charity. So that the Import of this Command may be comprehended in these Particulars.

1. Do not think there lies no Obligation on you to lend to your Fellow-*Christians*, who are in Streights and Necessities, and may, by your lending, raise themselves into a Condition to live comfortably and honestly in the World. This is an Act of *Christian* Love and Charity, and such as we ourselves may stand in need of; and *whatsoever you would have others do to you, do you the same to them*, according to the Rule, *Mat. vii. 12.*

2. Do not tell them that would borrow of you, that you have nothing to lend, when you have it; for that would be to add Lying to your Uncharitableness, which is both against the Nature of *Christian* Simplicity and Sincerity, and against the express Law, *Eph. iv. 25.*

3. Be

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3. Be willing to gratifie your honest Neighbours in this Request, when they would borrow of you, and overcome that Uncharitableness, and mistrust of God's Providence, or fear that you shall not receive your own again : For Flesh and Blood is apt to raise such Objections, which must be subdu'd by that Spirit which God hath given you ; *If ye walk after the Flesh ye shall die, but if ye through the Spirit do mortifie the Deeds of the Body, ye shall live.*

4. From him that would borrow of thee do not turn away. Yet so as to consider the Circumstances of the Person that would borrow of you. It is a wicked Man's Character, to borrow, and not to pay, *Psal. xxxvii. 21.* And when a Man is known to be so, we may lawfully use *Christian* Prudence and Wisdom. When Men have the Reputation of Honesty, Sincerity, and Diligence, their Industry deserves to be encouraged ; and since Lending is an Encouragement to them, they ought not to be sent away with a Refusal of their Request.

5. Lend not only to a Person of the same Religion, but to others also : God gave a Law to the Jews, *Deut. xv. 8. Thou shalt open thy Hand wide unto thy Brother, and shalt surely lend him sufficient for his need, in that which he wanteth.* This the Jews restrain'd to their own Sect, and to their Friends ; but *Christianity* being a Profession of a larger Charity, if even a Person who is not of the same Profession with you, would

would borrow of you, do not you turn away from him; nay, if the Person were an Enemy; this is evident from what follows in this Chapter; *But I say unto you, Love your Enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them that despitefully use you, and persecute you.*

6. Lend sometimes, even to Persons from whom you have no hopes of receiving any thing again. Express your Self-denial, your Conquest of the Flesh, your Love to God, and your Dependance upon his Providence. This is agreeable to the Command given, *Luke vi. 35 Lend, hoping for nothing again.* Not that this is to be done at all Times, and upon all Occasions; but sometimes, in order to overcome our Love of this present World; especially when Persons are by Providence, or by some extraordinary Accident fallen into decay; and particularly upon the account of a good Conscience: To this purpose, *Luke vi. 34.* See how ready God is to give to you, and to lend you what ye stand in need of; and why so? Surely, that you should be ready to help others.

These are the Particulars to which this Command hath particular Relation; and were Men truly conscientious, no doubt, this Law would be sufficient to guide a Christian in his Temporal Concerns; but the Wickedness and Perfidiousness of Men is grown great and extravagant, which hath obliged Magistrates to enact Laws to regulate

late this Lending, Borrowing, and Demanding what hath been Lent; and to permit Bonds and Obligations to secure the Lender of what he lends to another; which, tho' a *Christian* may, in some Cases, make use of, yet let us remember, that we are not to make use of all the Ways and Means the Law of the Land permits to prevent greater Evils. To keep on this side the Law, and as near as we can, to conform to the Law of our Master *Christ Jesus*, is the safest Way. And whereas the Law of the Land admits to Arrest, and Imprison Borrowers that do not repay: All that can be said in this Case is, He that shews most Mercy, is the better *Christian*.

Inferences.

All the *Application* I shall make of this Command is, to exhort you to real and actual Charity one towards another. God gives you, that you may give to others; and vouchsafes you Means, that you may be able to assist and succour others in their Needs. Labour earnestly to eradicate that Root of Bitterness, even Selfishness, which hinders you from doing many excellent Acts, which must adorn your Profession.

It's true, you are liable to be cheated, but who is not? If your Charity and *Christian* Kindness be abused, you are not the first, nor will be the last that are like to suffer in this kind.

We

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We must look higher than this World ; the Losses we meet with here will be perfect Gain, if they lead us to secure the everlasting Inheritance.

The Precepts of our great Master are so order'd, and so laid, that the Love of this World may be rooted out of our Hearts ; and if this Love be truly mortify'd, we are greater Gainers, than if *we gained the whole World, and lost our own Souls.*

It is true, we would fain keep this present World, and all the Enjoyments of it, and enjoy the Bliss of the next too ; but he that goes by that Principle, reckons without his Host, and will find himself miserably mistaken, when he comes to set his Accounts even with the Sovereign Judge of the World.

To meet with ungrateful and unreasonable Men, is no more than what our Master and his Disciples have met withal ; and to think we must fare better in this World than they, is to mistake the end of our Vocation.

Let us do good, and rejoyce in the doing of it, and be confident we shall be no Losers in the end : *He is faithful who hath promised,* and he will perform it too. It is but a little while that we are to continue here, and the great Question in the last Day will be, not how Rich, or how Great we have been here, but whether we have made Conscience of the Rules our Master hath left us. Blessed are those Servants,
whom

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whom their Master, when he comes, shall find so doing.

Prosperity is so far from being a Sign of God's Children, or of our Reconciliation to God, that a *Christian*, who enjoys much of it, hath very great reason to question his spiritual Condition and Interest in *Christ Jesus*. Not but that it's possible to be prosperous, and a true Servant of God; but where there is one that is so, there are multitudes that *drown themselves in Destruction and Perdition*.

I shall conclude with St. Paul's Saying, *1 Tim. vi. 17, 18. Charge them that are rich in this World, that they be not high-minded, nor trust in uncertain Riches, but in the Living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy: That they do good, that they be rich in good Works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate.*

SER.

SERMON XXXIV.

St. Matth. Ch. V. Ver. 43.

*Ye have heard, that it hath been said,
Thou shalt love thy Neighbour, and
hate thine Enemy.*

FOR the right understanding of this
Passage, these following Things will
deserve Consideration.

*I. By whom it was said, Thou shalt love thy
Neighbour, and hate thine Enemy.*

*II. How agreeable this Principle is to corrupt
Nature.*

*III. How contrary to the Principles of Reason,
and the Design of Christianity.*

*IV. What is the true Import of Love to our
Neighbour.*

*V. Whether, in some Sense it may not be a
Duty to love our Neighbour, and hate our
Enemy.*

Z

I. By

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I. *By whom it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy Neighbour, and hate thine Enemy.*

And most certainly,

1. It hath not been said so by Almighty God in the old Law; we have indeed a Command, *Levit. xix. 18. Thou shalt love thy Neighbour as thy self; but we read no where, Thou shalt hate thine Enemy; so far from it, that there are exress Precepts against it, as Exod. xxiii. 4, 5. When thou seest thine Enemy's Ox or Ass going astray, thou shalt freely bring him back to him again; and if thou shalt see the Ass of him that hateth thee, lying under his burthen, and wouldst forbear to help him, thou shalt surely help with him.* Besides, the Law God gave the Jews, was never intended as a Contradiction to the Law of Nature; it was to be a Help to the better Observance of it, but never design'd to reverse it, or any Part of it; and we are certain, the Law of Nature enjoins no such thing, but Mercy rather than Hatred to an Enemy; and this is evident from hence, not only because the Law of Nature bids us imitate God, who is kind to the Unthankful, and to the Evil; but because we find, that the very *Heathens*, from the Dictates of this Law of Nature, have shewn Mercy even to their greatest Foes, not only by giving them decent Burial after Death, as *Hannibal*, and others; but also by exercising Acts of Charity toward them while

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while they were alive; and therefore, God it could not be that said so, *Thou shalt love thy Neighbour, and hate thine Enemy.*

And therefore,

2. If God did not say so, then the Men that said and taught so, must be the same Men who had corrupted several other Laws of God mention'd in this Chapter, and de-torted them from their original Intent and Design, to accommodate them to the sinful Humours of Men, and to the Interest of the Flesh, even the *Scribes and Pharisees*, and their Ancestors, the ancient Masters of the Oral Law, who, by their Traditions, rendred the Law of God of none effect. I have observ'd often in the preceding Discourses, what false Glosses and Interpretations these Men did put upon the *Sixth* and *Seventh* Commandment, and the Law of *Divorces* and *Retaliation*. In like manner, this Precept of *loving their Neighbour*, could not escape their sacrilegious Hands; for as their Business was to make the Moral Law of God as easie to the Flesh as they could; and as they had made several Experiments of that Nature in others, so they dealt with this excellent Precept.

Indeed many of them, in *Christ's* Days, made no great account of this Duty; for when they spoke of the Sum of the Law of God, they repeated part of the *Sixth* Chapter of *Deut.* *Hear, O Israel, the Lord thy God is one God; and thou shalt love the Lord thy God, with all thy Heart, and with all*

thy Soul, and with all thy Might. This they said, (taking no notice of the Precept of *loving their Neighbour*) was the Sum of the Law of God, and this they inscrib'd and writ upon their *Phylacteries*, or Parchments they tied to their Wrists and Foreheads.

Which shews that the *Lamyer* who came to *Christ*, to enquire of him, *What he must do to inherit eternal Life*, *Luke. x. 27.* was more rational than the rest; for when *Christ* asked him, how readeest thou; he answered, *Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy Heart, and with all thy Soul, and with all thy Strength, and thy Neighbour as thy self.* Upon which, our Saviour tells him, That he had answer'd right, or *ευωχᾶς*, as *St. Mark* hath it, *Mark xii. 34.*

So that set aside some few judicious, thinking Persons, the *Scribes* and *Pharisees* in general pretending warrant from Tradition, had very slight and slender Notions of loving their Neighbour; and though they granted, it was a Command of God, and confessed their Obligation to obey it, yet they had made so many Restrictions of it, that in effect they had render'd it very insignificant. For,

1. By the Word *γῆ* or Neighbour, they understood a Friend, or a Person that was kind to them, or had oblig'd them; the largest Signification they would allow of, was that of a *Jew*, or a Person of the same Tribe, and Kindred, and Family, and Country, and Religion with them; inso-

much

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much, that they thought there lay no Obligation upon them to be so much as Civil, and do the common Offices of Humanity to a *Samaritan* or a *Heathen*, no not so much as to shew him the Way to a Town, or to a Well of Water, if he was dry, or spent with Thirst.

2. From this narrow Signification of the Word *Neighbour*, they flatter'd themselves, that if a Man had wrong'd, or done them an Injury, they were not oblig'd to love him, or that they might lawfully hate him, because he was no Friend, no Neighbour, no fit Person to be call'd so, and that they stretcht this even to Men of their own Religion, is evident from v. 46. of this Chapter, and their ordinary Practice.

3. Because God had order'd their Forefathers to destroy the seven Nations of the Land of *Canaan*, and to root out the Memory of *Amalek* from under Heaven, *Deut.* xxv. 19. They inferr'd, that they might lawfully hate all Nations that were not of their Religion; a strange Inference this; For though God made them the Executioners of his Wrath and Indignation, and intended them as Instruments, whereby he meant to punish and remove those wicked Men; yet from thence it follow'd not, that they were to hate them in ordinary Converse, or as they had occasion to meet them accidentally, or about Business. In a just publick War they were order'd to destroy them, and not as they appear'd in

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a private Capacity; nor was their Order to destroy them in a publick War, a sufficient Warrant for them to hate them at other Times; no more than an Executioner is bound to hate the Person he hangs up, or beheads, or executes by order of the Magistrate; no more than a Soldier, who fights in the Field, and kills a publick Enemy, must needs be suppos'd to hate the Person he kills, because he only executes the Command of his *General*.

Yet such ill *Logicians* they were, that from hence they inferr'd, 1. That all Persons who were not of their Religion, were their Enemies. 2. That they might lawfully hate them, and do those things against them, if they had a fair Opportunity, and could do it safely, whereby People commonly express their Hatred.

Thus the *Pharisees* taught them from Tradition, and these were the Men, even the ancient Masters of Tradition, from which the *Pharisees* deriv'd their Pedigree, who perverted this Precept of loving their Neighbour, and by whom it was said, *Thou shalt love thy Neighbour, and hate thine Enemy*: A Maxim very agreeable to corrupt Nature. And the

II. Thing I am to treat of, *As agreeable-ness to Human Nature*, appears

1. From hence, because corrupt Nature loves its Ease; it hates to be restrain'd. And this Maxim is so far from confining it, that

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that it gives it Elbow-room, and leave to follow its Course and natural Inclination. Take a Person abstracted from the sanctifying Grace of God, and that's a Stranger to the transforming Work of God's Spirit, if he may have his Will, thus he will act, *i. e.* *Love his Friend, and hate his Enemy.* This is that he would have, and there the Byass runs. Here is no need of any Self-denial, or swimming against the Stream, no need of great Consideration, or Deliberation, or deep Thoughts, it is as natural to an unregenerate Man, as sucking is to a Child. Other things he cannot learn without taking Pains, such as Riding, Fencing, Painting, Reading, Writing, &c. but this he learns without a Teacher, without going to School, without Breeding, without the trouble of an *Academy*, as easily as he doth Aversion from Goodness, and Backwardness to Vertue, and gratifying his brutish Appetite. In a Word, *This loving his Friend, and hating an Enemy*, is no painful Work, and therefore very agreeable to corrupt Nature.

2. With this Principle a carnal Man may justifie all the ill Nature he exercises in Converse, and all the ill Offices he doth to his Neighbour, he may excuse with this, *That he loves his Friend, and hates his Enemy.* Cain's angry Looks, and Joab's secret Grudges, and Absalom's Malice, and Judas's Envy, and the Pharisee's Spleen, may all shelter themselves under this Cover. With

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this Maxim the vain Man can baffle all the Checks of an unruly Conscience, put by its Importunities, stop its Mouth, dash its Terrors, and silence its loud Cries; and all this is very agreeable to corrupt Nature, and the Person who teaches such pernicious Doctrines, must needs be very welcome to wicked Men, and his Words as a lovely Song, of him that hath a pleasant Voice, and that can play well upon an Instrument. But *how irrational this Principle is, how contrary to the Rules of Reason, and the Design of Christianity,* as it deserves Enquiry, so it is the

III. Particular I am to speak of. And here,

1. Reason tells us, that Man stands in such Relations, one Man to another, Relations imparting Love, and Amity, and Kindness, that hating even of an Enemy is inconsistent with those Relations. *No Man ever yet hated his own Flesh?* this is an indubitable Principle of Reason. And now, let the Enemy we have be never so inveterate, never so malicious or injurious, still he carries the same Flesh and Blood about him that we do; the same Father made him, even God blessed for evermore; we are Brethren, and God created us both after his own Image; the same God maintains, feeds, and supports him that keeps our Souls in Life; and though his hostile Acts may be very great, yet still this Consideration will oblige us not to hate him. Not

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to mention, that Reason bids us prefer the Interest of the Soul, before that of the Flesh: And it's evident, that by the Enmity of others, our Souls are signal Gainers, as they have an opportunity to exercise the noblest Vertue, which is Self-conquest. *Cesar* said, *Tully* uses to forget nothing but Injuries; and *Aristotle* makes it the Character of a magnanimous Man; and it was well observ'd of that religious Man, in the Lives of the Fathers, *That an Enemy doth us a greater Kindness than our Friends*; and our Souls thrive best, when we have store of Enemies.

2. The Design of *Christianity* is to raise, to polish, and to refine our Natures, and to make us like God, and consequently, *hating an Enemy* must be contrary to this Design; for it doth not only keep our Natures in a mean, pitiful, base, and groveling Condition, but makes us very unlike God, who lets his Sun shine upon the Just and Unjust; and his Rain drop upon the Pastures of the Good and Bad. It's true, God doth punish his Enemies; but not to mention, that even this Punishment is an Act of Charity, as it is an Endeavour to reclaim them from the Errors of their Ways, this he doth not, till all other Means prove fruitless and ineffectual. However, to be sure, in this Life, on this side Hell, in the midst of the execution of his Wrath and Vengeance, he heaps innumerable Mercies upon them; and that's sufficient to prove what I intend, that we
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are not to hate an Enemy, because the Kindnesses we owe him, relate only to this present Life: And to this may be added, that the injurious Acts of an Enemy, bear no proportion to the Acts of Enmity we are guilty of against God, and we would not have God hate us, notwithstanding those Acts, it follows, that there is no reason for our hating an Enemy, upon the account of the Injuries he doth, or hath done us. But this we shall have occasion to discuss more largely in the following Verses.

Let's go on and

IV. Enquire, *What is the true Import of loving our Neighbour.* And,

1. As by a Neighbour in Scripture is meant every Man that stands in need of our Help and Assistance, and of whose Help and Assistance we may stand in need, as appears from the Parable of the wounded Man, *Luke x. 30.* so Love to our Neighbour imports a faithful Discharge of all the Duties of the second Table; which is the reason, that *St. Paul* affirms of this Love, that *it is the fulfilling of the Law*, because *Love works no ill to his Neighbour*, no ill to Princes, no ill to Magistrates, no ill to Parents or Relations, no ill to High or Low, Rich or Poor, no not to the meanest or poorest Creature, *Rom. xiii. 8, 9, 10.*

2. The measure of this Love is set down by God himself, *Lev. xix. 18. Thou shalt love thy Neighbour as thy self*, which properly de-

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denotes not the same Degree of Love, but the same Sincerity; and that we are to make our Love to our selves the Rule and Standard whereby we are to love others, according to the several Degrees of their Relations, and the several Degrees of Goodness which appear in them; for, no doubt, we are to be kinder to a Father, than to a Stranger, and more officious to a good Man, than to a bad one, yet so, that neither the greatest Strangers, nor the worst of Men be altogether excluded from our Kindness, or such Acts of Kindness, which we might rationally expect under the same Circumstances.

3. This Love to our Neighbour, implies not only Abstinence from Wrongs and Injuries, from dishonouring our Parents, from Murther, from Adultery, from Stealing, Lying, bearing False-witness, and from coveting our Neighbour's Goods; but all those positive Acts of Charity mention'd in 1 Cor. xiii. 4, 5, 6, 7. and 1 Per. xi. 8, 9, 10. and *Matth.* xxv. 35, 36. And these Acts must flow from inward Compassion: For as the Spirit of Man is the Principle of all Moral and Spiritual Acts; so whatever Acts of Love we exercise toward our Neighbour, they must come from the Heart, and from a Sense of our Duty, and of the Love of God; and these Acts must be so managed, that they become not accessary to other Mens Sins, for it's no Love, to love another into Sin, or sinful Compliances, which

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is the reason, that the Apostle pressing this Peace, and Love to our Neighbour, makes Holiness its inseparable Companion. *Follow Peace with all Men, and Holiness, without which no Man shall see the Lord,* Heb. xii. 14. And this Love is called *the Royal Law*, Jam. ii. 8. not because the *King of Kings* gave it, but because this Love to our Neighbour is the *Queen* of all Graces, and he that excels in it, reigns and rules over a Thousand Lusts and Temptations. But,

V. *May it not be, in some Sense, a Duty to love our Neighbour, and to hate an Enemy?* That which makes me take notice of this Point, is an Observation of *Origen*, who saith, *This is very good Divinity, if by the Enemy we understand the Devil.* Though its certain, that our Saviour, in these Words, doth not directly aim at this, yet it must be confessed, that in this Sense, that loose Principle of the *Pharisees* may bear a very good Construction.

Indeed, the Devil is the greatest Enemy we are to hate. We have renounc'd him in our Baptism, and we are sworn to that Hatred. Against him let's boldly vent our Hatred, even against all his Works, and all his evil Suggestions, which way soever they are presented to us, whether by the Flesh, or by the World, or by Evil Men.

Here we need move no Scruples, no Cases of Conscience, how far we may lawfully hate the Devil. We are to hate him

him with a perfect Hatred, and express it by trembling, and by abhorrency of all that's pleasing to him, or offensive to God. It's true, we see not the Devil, but we feel him, and whatever evil Thought, or Desire, or Motion appears in our Minds, let's firmly conclude, it comes either directly or indirectly from that Enemy. To this Enemy no Kindness is to be shewn. No League, no Peace, no Confederacy, no not so much as a Truce is to be made with him; with him we are to wage War continually: He is no Subject capable of making Peace with, for Peace with him is enmity against God, wounding our own Soul, destroying the Peace of our Consciences, and descending into the Chambers of Hell.

Inferences.

1. If we take a View of the Manners of Men in the Age we live in, one would think, that the *Pharisees* are still alive, and instill the same Principle into them, that they did into their Disciples in *Christ's* Days, viz. *Love your Friends, and hate your Enemies.* For the Actions of Men are so exactly conformable to this Rule, that if a Man were to measure *Christ's* Religion by the Practices of his Followers, he might go near to infer, that *Christ* taught this Doctrine as well as the *Pharisees.*

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To hate an Enemy we look upon to be a very just and reasonable thing, and do him all the ill Offices, as we have occasion; to speak Evil of him, to reproach him, to calumniate him, to invent Lies of him, and to report them too, we generally make so light of, that we wonder at the Man that offers to exhort us to better Principles.

Among *Heathens* and *Infidels* this would not look very strange; among Men who never heard of a *Jesus*, or of the Gospel, this might pass, though there is something even in the Voice of Nature, which might teach them better Things; but among *Christians*, who talk, and sing, and speak every Day of God's loving them, when they were his Enemies: This is a huge Paradox. *Christ* exercised the greatest Acts of Love toward us, in dying for us, when we were Enemies; we confess it, and our Churches ring of these glad Tidings. How easie would be the Inference!

"Hath God loved me when I was his
 "Enemy, and shall I hate my Fellow-
 "Christian, because I look upon him as
 "mine Enemy? Is this my Acknowledge-
 "ment of God's Love? Is this to express
 "my Gratitude for his Goodness? Had
 "God Compassion on me when I was his
 "Enemy, and shall I have none on mine?
 "Was God's Love to me intended as a Pat-
 "tern for me to follow, and shall I over-
 "look the Design, and please my self in
 "my

“ my Hatred and Ill-nature ? I am moved
 “ by the Examples of great Men, by the
 “ Examples of good Men, by the Examples
 “ of my ordinary Neighbours, and shall
 “ the greatest Example, the Example of
 “ God, the Example of *Christ Jesus* make
 “ no Impression upon me ?

How easie a matter were it to draw such
 Inferences from what we believe ! and what
 a Damp would this be to our Hatred ! And
 yet to see how careless, how regardless we
 are of it, and in despiight of this great Ex-
 ample, which we commend, and magnifie,
 justifie our Animosities against those whom
 we look upon to be our Enemies, would
 make a rational Man conclude, and very
 justly too, that whatever we pretend, or
 talk of, we do not believe that *Christ* died
 for us when we were God’s Enemies.

What ? believe it, and have no Sense of
 it ! or if we have a Sense of it, not to ga-
 ther our Duty from it ! Would any Man
 think that we are of the Number of those
 Believers we read of, *Heb. xi.* ? Their Be-
 lief affected and wrought upon their Hearts,
 and put them upon Heroick Actions ; and
 as God had done by them, so they did by
 others. This puts me in mind of the Justice
 of that Expostulation, and the Proceed-
 ings we read of, *Matth. xviii. 32, 33, 34.*
Then his Lord, after he had called him, said
unto him, O thou wicked Servant, I forgave
thee all that Debt, because thou desiredst me :
Shouldst not thou also have had Compassion on thy
Fellow-

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Fellow-Servant, even as I had pity on thee? And his Lord was wroth, and deliver'd him to the Tormentors, till he should pay all that was due unto him. Do you make the Application.

II. Though the Law of *Moses* enjoin'd this Precept, *To love our Neighbour as our selves*, yet the Gospel presses it much more, and in greater Instances too.

As by our Neighbours in the Gospel are meant, not only our nearest Friends and Relatives, not only those who dwell near us, and about us; not only those of the same Church and Religion with us, but all our Fellow *Christians*, and all Persons who were redeemed with the Blood of *Jesus*, so our Love is to extend to all these, and especially to them of the Household of Faith. To this purpose *St. Peter*, *Honour all Men, Love the Brotherhood*. Indeed, this Love to our Fellow *Christians*, the Apostles press with more than ordinary Fervour. They lay the Stress of Religion upon it, and when they would describe *Christians*, who thrive under the Showers and Irrigations of the Gospel, they say, *That their Faith grows exceedingly, and the Charity of every one toward each other abounds*, 2 *Thess.* i. 3.

This was the distinguishing Character of the primitive Believers, and their Love one to another, their dear, their tender, their affectionate Love one to another was taken notice of beyond any other Vertue whatsoever. They called themselves Brethren and

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and Sisters, and by the Brotherhood, or Fraternity, they meant the *Christian Church*, as appears from *Clemens Romanus*. Their Hospitality, their Candour, their Veracity, their Beneficence, were the Wonder of all Spectators.

Their Tenderness to the Afflicted, to Prisoners, to Captives, to the Sick and the Lame, to the Ignorant, and to their very Enemies was unspeakable, insomuch, that *Julian the Apostate* saw there was no way to propagate *Heathenism*, like that of imitating *Christians* in their Works and Labours of Love and Charity.

Hereby shall all Men know, that ye are my Disciples, if ye love one another; and so it was in those purer Ages, and they were known more by their mutual Love, than by their talking of *Christ Jesus*. How is this Character inverted at this Day, and one may say, *Hereby do all Men know who are Christians, even by their hating one another*. I know not which is the harder Task, whether Love to God, or to our Neighbour. Sure I am, that many who pretend great Love to God, are strangely defective in their Love to their Neighbours. What a Stir do many Men make about Religion, and yet make nothing of Slandering, Abusing, Deriding, Undervaluing their Neighbours. My Brethren, *Doth a Fountain at the same place send forth bitter Water and sweet*? Indeed, none is so fit to love God dearly, as he that doth exercise himself very much in

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Love

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Love to his Neighbour. It's true, one must help the other, and Love to God must Influence that to our Neighbours; but still, great Acts of Love to our Neighbours are the best Preparatives for high Degrees of Love to God.

The Branches of this Love to our Neighbours, are many and various, and he who abounds in these Acts of Love, gets a holy Assurance, that he is neither *barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.*

Lord! How do we confine our Love to little Seats and Parties? and from hence comes that Bitterness of Spirit of one Party against another; and how hard is it to find a *Christian* of a truly *Catholick* Love and Charity?

When shall we be wiser! When shall that pristine Unity and Purity return! When shall that admirable Spirit, which shined so bright in the primitive Believers revive again? Lord! When shall *thy Kingdom* come, that the whole Multitude which believe, shall be of *one Heart, and of one Soul!*

The Spirit, and the Bride say Come; and let him that hears say Come. Come thou God of Love, thou Prince of Peace, thou Lover of Concord and Unity, Come, Amen, even so come Lord Jesus.

S E R.

SERMON XXXV.

St. Matth. Ch. V. Ver. 44.

*But I say unto you, Love your Enemies,
bless them that curse you, do good to
them that hate you, and pray for them
which despitefully use you, and perse-
cute you.*

M Arcellinus writing to
St. Austin tells him, *Vid. Lap. on*
That the great Stum- *Joh. 4. 12.*
bling-Block which *p. 492.*
lay in the Way of the Heathens of his Time,
especially of the wittier Sort, and hindred
them from embracing Christianity, were chief-
ly these three, the Incarnation of our Lord; the
Meanness of his Miracles, which they thought
those of Apollonius Tymanus did equal, and
the Prescriptions of the Text, *Love your En-
emies, bless them that curse you, &c.*

Not to meddle with their first and second Head, this last particularly they could not digest, they look'd upon't as obliging Men to work Miracles, and thought it in a manner as easie to snatch a Man from the Embraces of the Grave, as to receive an Enemy into their own. What! *Love an Enemy?* He might as well have bid us swallow Poyson, and take Toads and Vipers into our Bosoms. What! Love a Man that hath sought my Life? Carefs a Wretch that hath attempted to ravish the Pledges of my Love? Take him into my Arms that hath endeavour'd to snatch from me the dearest Blessings I enjoy? He might as well have bid us pull up Mountains by the Roots, transplant Islands, touch the Sun with our Fingers, and empty the Waters of the Ocean.

Indeed, this seems to be the highest Step of *Christianity*, and he that is arriv'd to an habitual Observance of this Rule, may not unfitly be said to be come to the Top of the Mount of God. But still, whatever Noise be made about it, it implies no such Contradiction, as the Heathens and sensual Men did, or may imagine. For,

1. Let us grant it's hard, but the harder the Work is, the greater is the Reward. He that gave this Command, understood what Reward was design'd for the Votary. No marvel if *Heathens* thought it strange, who had but imperfect, and broken, and uncertain Notions of another Life. If the Re-

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ward be proportion'd to the Difficulty we see Men refuse no Pains. What is daily practis'd in martial or warlike Exploits is a Demonstration of it. The Recompence *Christ* designed for those who should cheerfully obey this Command, doth not only equal, but infinitely transcend the Difficulty of the Task; and he that considers what is promised, must confess, that the Work is not worthy to be compared with the Grandure of the Recompence, and therefore there is nothing unreasonable in the Iajunction.

2. Of all Men, those who are in love with any Vice, have no reason to talk against this Precept; for they practise what they condemn, and do things as unnatural as loving an Enemy can be supposed to be. Were it not for the lapsed Condition of Man, and the Depravation of our Faculties, Sin would be a very unnatural thing to the Soul. The blessed Spirits, who have left Mortality, and Things below, and recover'd their primitive Integrity and Innocence, have as great an Antipathy to Sin, as Men here on Earth can have to a Toad; which shews, that Sin is an Enemy to a rational Soul, and as contrary to right Reason, as Darkness is to Light, or a Chronical Distemper is to Health; and that it is agreeable upon no other account, than Cinders and Ashes, and Chalk are to some Stomachs, because of their Corruption: So that a vitious Man really loves his Enemy,

may, his greatest Enemy: He loves the Devil that prompts him to it, that Devil whom at other Times he doth Abjure, and at whose Presence he would tremble; he loves Damnation, and eternal Death; for so we read, *Prov. viii. 36.* And therefore, of all Men, such Persons have no reason to speak against this Rule as unreasonable.

3. What is commanded here hath been done, as I shall shew in the Sequel; how, and which way, and by what means it hath been done; how far the Grace of God must concur, what Industry must be used; what Impediments are to be removed, and how the whole Concern is to be managed, I do not now inquire, but supposing that it hath been done, the Inference is rational, that it may be done again. It's true, they were Saints and holy Men who have done it; but since it is very possible to be a Saint, and to arrive to a State of Holiness, it follows, this Precept is practicable, and far from being impossible. Nay,

4. It hath been done with respect to some Acts at least, by natural Men, and upon the account of Temporal Interest, either in a Bravado, or out of Generosity, or to be talk'd of, and to have Glory of Men: Examples and Passages of this Nature are frequent in History; and if it were possible to do it upon a Motive of Temporal Interest, why should it be thought impossible to be done upon a greater Motive,

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tive, even Mens eternal Welfare? It is but changing the Principle, which is the Spring of Motion, and the shining Brass may become Gold, the Counterfeit a real Vertue; and the Shew may turn into Substance.

And having thus removed the grand Objection that lies against this Precept, I now proceed to explain it.

I. *The general Command. Love your Enemies.*

II. *The Branches, or the Particulars of it. Bless them, &c.*

I. *The general Command. Love your Enemies.* And here I must note,

1. That Christ doth not speak here of a publick, or professed, and open Enemy of our Country or Nation, that makes War upon us, and seeks the destruction of the Community, or a subversion of the Government; for though there is an Humanity to be shewn, even to a Publick Enemy, by what the Prophet Elisha did to the Host of Syria, when he had enclosed them in Samaria, the King of Israel would have dispatch'd them with the Sword. No, saith the Man of God, *Set Bread and Water before them, that they may eat and drink, and go to their Master,* 2 Kings vi. 22. And we know, that even Heathen Nations have allow'd decent Burial to a publick Enemy, when slain in Battel; yet these are not the Persons Christ directly aims at in these

Words. *Christ* as he came not to reverse the Laws of Government, nor prescrib'd a Model or Platform of it, but left Governments as he found them, supposing them to be agreeable to the Law of Nature, and the Good of Mankind; so by this Precept he did not forbid *Christian* Kings and Princes entering into a just defensive War for the Security of their Country; nor can it be imagin'd, that by this Rule he would oblige Magistrates and Sovereigns so to love the publick Enemy, as to let him Rage, and Ravage, and Burn, and Plunder, without any Opposition.

This Precept being given to *Christians*, consider'd as they live and converse together, we must conclude, that by the Enemies who are to be loved, are meant Enemies in a more private Capacity, such as we meet with in Conversation, and in the Places and Stations we are in, whether they be High or Low, whether Superiors, or Equals, or Inferiors. Nor,

2. Must we think that this Precept is given to Magistrates, with respect to Malefactors, and publick Offenders; as if by Vertue of this Command they were not to punish them. This would be manifest Injustice to the Publick Good, and we may be very confident, *Christ* would not have us do Evil, that Good may come out of it; nor obey one Precept at the expence of another.

Though

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Though a Magistrate, if he will act Conscientiously, ought to behave himself as a Father who loves his Child; when he doth Chastise him, and therefore Chastiseth him, because he loves him; so Magistrates are to punish with Pity and Compassion; and in private Injuries, where their Office is not concern'd, they are bound to forgive and love their Enemies as much as others, yet doth not this interfere with the necessary Administration of publick Justice; not to mention, that it is said in the Text, *Love your Enemies*; but a publick Malefactor or Offender is not properly the Magistrate's Enemy, I mean no Enemy to his Person or Fortune, or Relatives, but to the Law of the Land, and the common Good; and therefore if the Magistrate doth punish him, he doth not punish him as his Enemy, and therefore sins not against this Precept, but as an Enemy of the Common-Wealth in general. It's possible the Malefactor may be an Enemy to the Magistrate, consider'd in other Circumstances; in which Case, the Magistrate is bound to exercise all the Acts of Love, here mention'd, toward him, and, notwithstanding these, punish him according to Law, and the Duty of his Place and Calling. So that the Office of a Magistrate is not superseded by this Command. Nor,

3. Doth this Law of *loving our Enemies*, forbid us reproving an Enemy for the Sins

Sins he involves himself in by hating us ; much less doth it import, that we are to love his Sins and Follies, or flatter him in his Undecencies and Insolencies. There is no doubt, we may lawfully tell him of his Faults in a meek and rational Way, and seek to reduce him to a better Temper ; and in doing so, we do nothing against that Love we owe him ; so far from it, that it is an Argument of Hatred not to rebuke him, *Lev. xix. 17. Thou shalt not hate thy Brother in thy Heart ; thou shalt in any wise rebuke thy Neighbour, and not suffer sin upon him.* Nor,

5. Doth this Command import, that we are to make an Enemy our Bosom Friend ; to whom we are to unburden our selves, and make him acquainted with the Secrets of our Souls. Friendship in this strict Sense is Master of Discretion more than Duty ; nor is our Love to our Enemies prejudic'd by not making them Friends in this Sense. Indeed, if by the Coals of Fire we heap upon their Heads, if by the warmer Kindnesses we shew them, we melt them into a tractable and docible Temper, and then prove occasions of their becoming new Men, we may, if we see it convenient, raise our Love to a higher Degree, even to that of Friendship, and make him that was an Enemy, as our own Soul ; but while he is an Enemy, he is not a Subject capable of entering into the Bond of Friendship with him, except by Friendship we mean the Acts of Love, hereafter mention'd.

6. As

6. As an Enemy is a Person who cherisheth a secret Spleen and Malice against us in his Heart, and as occasion serves, vents and expressees it either in his Words or Actions, either by Reviling or Abusing us, or doing Unkindnesses, or attempting to Betray, or Bespatter, or to Ruin and Undo us, in which Sense, even a Husband, a Wife, and the nearest Relatives may be Enemies, so this Love we owe them imports an inward Affection to them, even Bowels of Mercy and Compassion, and a certain Tenderneſs within. The Acts whereby our Love to them is to be expreſſed, muſt have ſome Root, and that Root muſt be the Heart, the true Seat of Love; and let no Man plead here, that Love ariſing from the agreeableneſs of the Object, it's impoſſible there ſhould be any real Love in the Heart toward an Enemy, becauſe of the diſagreeableneſs of the Object to our Temper, and contrariety to our Humour and Intereſt; for though there may be no agreeableneſs with reſpect to the Wrong he doth, or hath done us, yet there are other Reſpects, and thoſe more weighty, and of greater Concernment, in which a Likeneſs and Similitude appear, and conſequently a ſuitable Foundation for this Love. For,

1. He is God's Creature, and ſo are we.
2. He is a Man, and ſo are we.
3. He is a Neighbour ſtill, nor doth the Wrong he doth us, deprive him of that Relation.
4. May be he is a *Chriſtian* too, and profeſſes

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fesses the same Faith, the same God, the same Jesus, and the same Religion; all which respects, make even an Enemy an agreeable Object of our Love. Nay, his very Enmity doth formally dispose and qualify him for our Love; for the Nature of Love is, *That it is not easily provoked*, 1 Cor. xiii. 5. And I need not tell you, that Men are not provoked by Kindnesses, but by injurious Acts; and these being the Acts of an Enemy, Love not being easily provoked by such Acts, the Enemy must be a very proper Object of our Love.

But let's go on and consider,

II. *The particular Acts of this Love, or, whereby this Love is to be expressed.* And the First is,

1. *Bless them that curse you.* This is to give good Language for bad, kind Answers for Revilings, praising the Good that is in the Enemy, for his denying that there is any in our selves, and gracious Wishes for his base and horrid Imprecations. The Apostles did so, for *being reviled, we bless; being defamed, we entreat*, saith St. Paul, 1 Cor. iv. 13. This look'd great! What a lovely excellent Sight was this! How pleasing to God, how pleasing to Angels, how pleasing to all rational and understanding Men! Do but take a serious View of it, you your selves cannot but like it, approve of it, and commend it.

What

What Harmony, what Beauty, what Sweetness, what Evenness, what Perfection must there be in such a Soul! What a command over his Passions must we suppose in such a person! and can any thing look more stately and magnificent? And if there be such Beauty in it, why are not we enamour'd with it? Why should we think much of it to cry *God bless you*, when the Enemy cries *God damn you*? Is not the one as easily said as the other, and is there not far greater satisfaction in the one than in the other? What if the brutish Man do curse us, what hurt can his cursing do us, while we do not answer him according to his Folly? The Curse may fall on his own Head, but cannot singe a Hair of ours.

His ill Language, doth it not look very odious in him, and doth it change its Face or Nature, if we use it by way of Retaliation? Can that be lovely in us, which all Men take to be Deformity in him? Doth not the Enemy sin grievously against God, when he doth revile or curse us? And shall not we be concern'd at his Sin? How are we concern'd, if we do not mourn for it? How do we mourn for it, if we do not pity him? How do we pity him, if we do not endeavour to reform him? How shall we reform him, except we shew him a good Example? How can we shew him a good Example, if we do not let him see, that there is a better Spirit in us? And how shall he be convinc'd of that, if we do not
return

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return soft Answers for his rough and insolent ones, even Blessings for Curses? Such *Christian* returns God blesses sometimes with Conversion of the Enemy, and thinks himself concern'd to reward the Self-denial with an extraordinary Providence.

To this purpose *Moschus* tells us, That three religious Men travelling, and losing their Way, and thereupon belated, were forc'd to lie down on the Ground, the Night coming on, and the Sky growing very dark: But so it happen'd, that ignorantly they laid themselves down at the Edge or Corner of a Corn-field, whereby they pressed a Portion of Corn on the Ground. Early in the Morning the Owner of the Field coming by, and seeing what was done, began to be in a Passion, and cursed them bitterly, saying, *You Religious Men, if you had had the Fear of God before you, you would not have done so.* The innocent Men let him run on, and then, with all Gentleness imaginable, told him, *Truly you say right, if we had had the Fear of God before us, we should never have done so.* The Man went on cursing and railing, and they still confessing their Faults, and begging his Pardon, which at last so wrought upon the cholerick Man, that he left his Oxen, and his Fields, and gave himself up to God, and the Severities of Religion.

2. *Do good to them that hate you.* This is to do Acts of Beneficence to the Enemy, to Cloath him, to Feed him, to give him Drink,

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Drink, to instruct him, to Guide him, to Direct him, to Relieve him, to Assist him in his Necessities, when he is in Want or Perplexity, or stands in need of our Help. So did *Christ Jesus*, for he healed the Ear of *Malchus*, who came out against him to apprehend him; and what were all the Days of his Ministry among the *Jews*, but so many Instances of doing Good to his Enemies? even to those who call'd him all to naught. So did the Apostles, so did the primitive Believers. Their Enemies were the Objects of their Tenderneſs, when they were Sick, or wanted their Assistance, they watch'd with them, they visited them, they attended them, they ran for them, they dressed their Sores, even then when they labour'd under the Plague, and the Tokens of God's Anger.

The very *Heathens* saw, that this *doing Good for Evil* was necessary to the Perfection of Humane Nature, which made *Phocion*, when unjustly condemn'd by the *Athenians*, being ask'd, before his Death, whether he had any Command to his Son, said, *Go and tell him, that I charge him to forget the Injuries the Athenians have done me.*

But Instances of this Nature were very rare among the *Heathens*, and besides their Principle was naught. But among the ancient *Christians*, this was a very common thing, and they strove to express their Religion by this Love. *Eusebius* of *Samosata*, an orthodox Bishop, dying of his Wound, which

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which a furious *Arrian* Woman had given him, by throwing a great Stone at his Head, made it his Request to the Magistrate of the Town, before he died, that the Woman might not suffer, nor be any way molested for the Fact. *Alexander*, Bishop of *Jerusalem*, a Servant of his having robb'd him of a considerable Sum of Money, when that Servant came afterwards to be sold for a Slave, the Bishop hearing of it, sent and had him redeem'd, and paid down the Price of his Ransom. In a Word, abundance of such Instances there are in the *Christian Church*; and therefore *Tertullian* makes this the proper Vertue of *Christians*, taught by no Religion in the World besides. And if this be the Nature of our Religion, to do good to them that hate us, how do we satisfie our selves without this Ornament of our Profession? Why do we stand reasoning and disputing about the Hardness of the Thing, and do not put our Hand to the Plough?

If this be our Religion, why are we loath to put it in practice? What! do we think it enough to be able to say, that there is such a Precept in the *Pandects* of our Religion, in the Body of our Divinity, and take no farther Care? We take our selves to be very much enlighten'd to what former Ages were, yet, for ought we see, the Examples and Instances of doing Good for Evil, are not so frequent now, as they were in Ages labouring under greater Darkness.

Our

Our Chronicles tell us of *Richard I. King of England*, that when a Soldier, one *Gour-dion*, had purposely wounded him with an Arrow, of which he died soon after; the Villain being taken Prisoner, the King sent for him, desirous to know the reason of his barbarous Attempt, who very resolutely told him, that the reason was, because the King had formerly killed his Father, and two of his Brothers, which Words so mov'd the King, that he not only pardon'd and discharg'd him, but order'd him a hundred Shillings. It was become a Proverb in *Bishop Cranmer's Time*, That if a Man did do him a shrew'd Turn, he was sure to have him for ever after for his Friend. And of *St. Lewis the French King*, we read, that when a Woman had revil'd and reproach'd him upon some Acts of Government, not very pleasing to the People, he commanded his Servants to carry her a Reward, because she had given him an opportunity of exercising his Patience.

These Instances I mention, not to set off the Discourse, but to encourage you to follow them. And let's but consider, which of the two is most likely to afford Comfort upon a Death-Bed, Revenge, or doing Good for Evil: I appeal to the most carnal Person here, whether he do not think the latter to be the most reviving Cordial. A Cordial indeed! for this gives Confidence to the dying Man, that God will do him Good, for the Evil he hath done against him,

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him, it being a standing Rule, *With what measure ye meet, it shall be measured to you again,* Luke vi. 38.

3. *Pray for them that persecute you, and despitefully use you.* This is to offer up our Supplications to God, our earnest Supplications, Desires, and Requests, that God would reform them, and pardon them, make them kind to us, and turn their Hearts, and not lay their Sin to their Charge, but make it an Opportunity to convert them, to bring them to a Sense of their Duty, their Danger, and the Necessity of Holiness.

Thus our Blessed Master pray'd, *Luk. xxiii.*

34. *Father forgive them, for they know not what they do.* Thus pray'd St. Stephen, *Acts vii. 60.* *Lord lay not this Sin to their Charge,* and when he had said so, *he fell asleep.* Surely this good Man died in Charity. He gives a Kiss of Peace to his Enemies, and with this Olive-Leaf in her Mouth, his Soul flies away to Heaven.

Shall any of us, after all these Motives, be loath to pray for his Enemies? Shall we plead, that such a Man's Malice, and Spight, and Affronts, and the Injuries he hath done us are so full of Venom, and carry those Aggravations with them, that they are not to be put up. Are they greater than those which were offer'd to *Christ Jesus*, or the *Proto-Martyr*? The greatest Injury that can be done to a Man, is taking away his Life, for *Skin for Skin*, and *all that a Man hath*,
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he gives for his Life. Yet see, how thy Saviour pray'd for his Crucifiers, for Men that did not only rob him of the Comforts of Life, but put him to the most painful, and most ignominious Death. *St. Stephen*, all bruised and torn with Stones, Streams of Blood running down from his Head and Face, faint and languishing, and ready to expire, makes yet a shift to get upon his Knees, and to pray for his Murderers.

Such Prayers God gives solemn Audience to, and blesses with Miracles of Mercy, and the Enemies remember'd in such Prayers, receive considerable Benefit. That Three thousand Souls were converted, and prick'd at the Heart by *St. Peter's* Sermon, is justly believ'd to have been the effect of *Christ's* Prayer for his Enemies. And the Fathers generally tell us, that *St. Stephen's* Prayer was the Cause that *St. Paul* was converted from a Persecutor, from a Blasphemer, to the Faith, to Holiness, and to be a Preacher of that Doctrine, which before he persecuted from City to City, and was exceeding mad against.

Such Force have these Prayers for our Enemies, especially if coming from the Heart: Nor must we content our selves with Prayers for our Enemies in general, but Intercessions and Groans unutterable must be particularly for that Enemy, that Man or Woman who hath persecuted and despitefully used us, loaded us with the blackest Calumnies, and offer'd the greatest

violence to our Persons. These must be named and specified in our Prayers, both Publick and Private; and for the Person who hath been injurious to us, our Supplications must be put up, not only once and twice, but often and importunately, and for ought we know, he that went out from us an Enemy, may come home a Friend, a Friend to God and to Religion, a Friend to our Persons and Concerns, a Friend to all that call on the Name of the Lord *Jesus*.

And having thus represented to you the Commands of your Master, I may justly expect, you should all with one Heart, and with one Voice, say as the *Israelites* at the hearing of the Conditions of the Covenant, *All that the Lord our God hath said we will do*. If this be not the effect, remember you go home Enemies of God, and of *Christ Jesus*. There is no Medium, you must either be God's Friends, or his Enemies; if you are Friends, you will stick at nothing he commands you. *Christ* himself saith so, *Joh. xv. 14*. If his Commands be nauseous, or grievous, or a burthen to you, most certainly you love him not, and therefore are not his Friends; and if not his Friends, what remains, but being his Enemies; and can you sit down quietly under such a fearful Character, especially when you read, and consider what you read, *Luke xix. 27*. *As for those mine Enemies, that would not that I should reign over them, bring them hither, and slay them before me*.

But

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But how is all this to be done? We live in an Age wherein Men do scarce love their Friends, much less their Enemies. Such Lovers are very rare, very few Examples appear, and what Encouragement is there to venture upon a Duty so unpleasing, so distasteful to Flesh and Blood? However, the Duty looks fair and lovely, and Reason says, it is a Perfection which deserves our Ambition and Endeavour.

But how is this excellent Temper to be attain'd?

Why! easily enough, if you are not averse from wholesome Counsel; if besides the tempting Reward that is before you, you are willing to be govern'd by the following Directions.

1. Represent not an Enemy to your selves in those black Characters you usually do. There are fairer and finer Colours in which he may be drawn, and make use of these.

2. When ever a Person doth you an Injury, look higher, and believe, and perswade your selves, the Almighty sent him, and Providence order'd it, and an All-seeing God had a Hand in it: *David* did so when *Shimei* cursed him, and it quieted him. He look'd off from *Shimei*, and saw God in the Calumny, not as the Author of it, but as one that made use of it. He regarded *Shimei* as God's Executioner, as the Instrument of his Displeasure, and the Rod of his Anger; and what a Calm did this Consideration

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tion produce in his Soul, while *Abishai's* Fingers itch'd to take off his Head.

2. Look upon the Enemy as thy Physician. He is intended to bring Salvation to thy House. He is sent to cure thy Soul, and it will certainly appear and prove so, if thou make his Wrongs and Malice an opportunity to reflect upon the Wrongs and Injuries done to thy God, and repentest of them, and mak'st thy Peace with him. The Enemy is a Preacher of Patience, a Teacher of Submission, a School-master that is to instruct thee in the Art of Humility, and resisting Temptations. If thou improve his Snarlings and rude Assaults, mak'st them Occasions and Incentives to Prayer, to do good to his Soul and Body, thy Soul will thrive, and thy Spirit grow healthy, and his *Injuries will become Gems, and Jewels, and precious Stones*, as that Holy Man said, *whereby the Foe pelts and drives thy Soul to Heaven.*

3. Look upon the Enemy as blind, blind with Rage, and Fury, and Envy, and Malice; and this will incline thy Heart to pity him. Who doth not commiserate a blind Man? And which is the greater Blindness, Corporal or Spiritual? The poor Wretch sees not how sweet and how gracious the Lord is, nor what the Hope of his Calling is, nor what the Riches of his Grace are. He hath no Sense of the Height, and Breadth, and Depth, and Length of the Love of *Jesus Christ*. He sees not the mighty Obligations that

that lie upon him to love his Neighbour as himself, and therefore he is blind, and if blind he is miserable, and if miserable, will you add Misery to Misery, and hate him who is already in a deplorable Condition? Nay, if he be miserable, doth not he deserve your Prayers, your Alms, and your Charity?

4. May be his Nature is not changed, he is not converted, knows nothing of Regeneration, nothing of the sanctifying Grace of God, and wilt thou be angry with him for acting according to his Nature? Why art not thou angry with the Fire for burning the Stuff that is thrown into it? An unconverted Man acts according to his Temper and Interest, and Passion, according to his Nature, as much as the Sun, and Rain, and Wind. These move not thine Anger, or thy Rage, let them blow, and scorch, and wet, and why should the others acting according to his Nature, stir up thy Wrath and Indignation?

2. There is a Promise, and a Promise which if believed, and rely'd upon, will very much animate and encourage us to these Acts of Love. It is, *Prov. xvi. 7. If a Man's ways please the Lord, he will make his very Enemies to be at Peace with him*, we have no more to do, but still to be Followers of that which is good, and God will turn and wind Things for our advantage, and make an Alteration even in the Hearts of our Enemies, as great as we see in *Esau*, who before had

threatned Jacob with Death, and on a sudden by a secret invilible Hand is forced to fall into his Brother's Embraces, and though this may not always happen, yet the Promise will certainly be fulfill'd in something greater and better than is hinted in the Letter.

3. Oblige your selves to this Love in the Holy Sacrament of *Christ's Supper*, the fittest Time and Place to engage your selves to this Work. Though before we come to this Ordinance, our Endeavours must be strong and vigorous after the Qualifications of the *Text*; yet the Sacrament of the *Eucharist* is both an excellent Motive, and a very considerable Help to fix and establish this Love to our Enemies. Talk what you will, it is not Philosophy, nor conversing with Men of this Age, nor being at Court, nor seeing Fashions, that will make you Masters of this Love. No, the School of the Cross teaches this Self-denial, and the Sacrament is that School. There a crucify'd Saviour, dying for his Enemies is seen; and what were all his Prayers, and Tears, and Agonies, but Kindnesses to Enemies. These we contemplate in this Ordinance, at least, they come to very little purpose, that approach not with this Consideration. Here, to see his Love and Charity spread and diffuse it self with all the Acts of Love my *Text* speaks of, and to believe all this, must needs help to melt the Heart, and make us willing to bless them that curse us, to do good to them

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them that hate us, and to pray for them which despitefully use us.

Let the Soul walk about the Cross and think. Behold the Son of God whom I have promised to follow, and to imitate, even he who bleeds on the Cross, he blessed me that had cursed him, did good to me that had hated him, and pray'd for me that had despitefully used him. If I am not like him, how shall I be washed with his Blood! The Language of the Gospel is, that I must be conformable to his Image, and chang'd into it, and tread in his Steps, if I mean to be partaker of his Merits; and shall not I consider the Importance of this Truth, and contrive that the same Mind may be in me which was also in *Christ Jesus*.

Thy Death, sweet *Jesu*, must do it. Thy Death must kill my Hatred and my Rages. Thy Love must burn that Dross away, and whenever my unruly Passions rise against my Enemy, I'll throw the whole weight of thy Love upon them, that they may be crush'd to Death, and expire.

I conclude with a Passage of *St. John*, and the rather, because he was the great Preacher of this Love, and *St. Jerom* takes notice, that when he was very old, and his Disciples came to visit him, still he would say, *My little Children love one another*, and being ask'd, why he did repeat this so often, he said, *This is all, Love one another, as you ought to do, it is enough, you need no more.* I conclude, I say, with *1 John ii. 9, 10, 11.*
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He that saith he is in the Light, and hateth his Brother, is in Darknes, even until now. He that loves his Brother, abideth in the Light, and there is none occasion of stumbling in him. But he that hateth his Brother is in Darknes, and walketh in Darknes, and knows not whither he goes, because that Darknes hath blinded his Eyes.

SER.

SERMON XXXVI.

St. Matth. Ch. V. Ver. 45.

That ye may be the Children of your Father which is in Heaven; for he makes the Sun to rise on the Evil and on the Good, and sendeth Rain on the Just and Unjust.

OUR Saviour having in the two foregoing Verses endeavour'd to rectifie the wilful Mistakes of Men, the Jews especially, about loving their Neighbours, and hating their Enemies, confuted their false Maxims and Notions, establish'd a standing Law among his Followers, and charged them, as they hop'd for the everlasting Kingdom he promised and proclaim'd, *to love their Enemies, to bless them that curse them, to do good to them that hate them, &c.* He lays down some Motives and Arguments in the Text, which he thought would prevail with rational and

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considerate Men, and such who had a serious Sense of God and another Life, prevail, I mean, if seriously thought of, and consider'd, and ponder'd in the Heart.

It's thinking that puts Men upon Action; and we see with what Violence and Vehemence Men fall to work; if they apprehend in it something that's profitable, or pleasant, or preservative from Evil; and indeed, in so great a Work, *as loving our Enemies, and doing good to them that hate us*, a Work so contrary to corrupt Nature, and the receiv'd Customs of Men; the Motives must not be survey'd slightly or superficially, but so regarded; that no Objection, no Temptation of Flesh and Blood, may stop or hinder the Votary from doing so: Carnal Men may fancy, that no Motive can be strong enough to effect it; but if it were so, our blessed Master would have been under a great Mistake, which is impossible, *yea, let God be true, and every Man a Liar.* He knew they would prevail, and no doubt they will prevail with Men who are ambitious of things unseen, ambitious of the invisible future Glory, ambitious of being *Children of their Father which is in Heaven*; for so we read, *That you may be Children of your Father which is in Heaven, for he lets the Sun rise upon the Evil and the Good, and sendeth Rain upon the Just and Unjust.*

Concerning the Phrases and Expressions of the Text, I have only this to observe, That for *us*, Children, some ancient Copies

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pies read *ὡς ὁ πατήρ*, like your Father which is in Heaven, which it's probable, was at first only a marginal Note, and was afterward by the Transcribers put into the Text. However, the Sense is the same, and to be Children, is to be like our Father which is in Heaven.

In Heaven, not that he is confined to that Place, for he is not far from every one of us, Act. xvii. 27. and The Heaven, even the Heaven of Heavens cannot contain thee, saith Solomon, 1 Kings viii. 27. And, whither shall I go from thy Spirit, or whither shall I flee from thy Presence? If I ascend into Heaven, thou art there; if I make my Bed in Hell, behold thou art there; if I take the Wings of the Morning, and dwell in the uttermost Parts of the Sea, even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me, saith David, Psal. cxxxix. 7, 8, 9. yet he is in Heaven, because there is his Court, his Palace, his Throne where he manifests himself in a most signal manner and his Power, Goodness, Mercy, Influences, are felt and dispensed there infinitely beyond what is known here on Earth.

This is all I think necessary to observe concerning the Expressions used here. The more material things may be resolv'd into these following Propositions.

- I. Men are made Children of God, not born so.
- II. The great Design of the Gospel is to make us like God, like our Father, which is in Heaven.

III. The

III. *The greatness and vastness of God's Bounty is to be seen, in his letting the Sun rise upon the Evil and the Good, and sending Rain upon the Just and Unjust.*

I. *Men are not born Children of God, but made so.*

That you may be the Children of your Father which is in Heaven, which shews, there is something to be done, that they may become God's Children, and come into the World with that Privilege. Indeed, if we consider God as the Original Cause of all things, as in him we all live, and move, and have our Being, and as of one Blood he hath made all Nations of Men, in that respect, he is the Father of us all, and all are his Children, and born so. But I do not take the Expression in that lax Signification here, but in a stricter Sense; for Children which God not only creates, but loves, whom he delights in, as well as give Reason and Understanding to, whose Names he writes in Heaven, and for whom he designs the everlasting Inheritance, whom he adopts in Christ Jesus, and treats as his Friends and Favourites, and who are dear as well as related to him; and to be sure Men are not born such Children, no more than a curious Picture is the Product of the Garden or the Field.

Man is born like a wild Asses Colt, saith Job xi. 12. and according to the Doctrine of our Church, we are born in Sin, as David
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professes of himself, *Psal. li. 5.* and are by *Nature Children of Wrath*, *Eph. ii. 2.* and if either a new Principle be not put into us, or that Principle be not improv'd, we become *Children of Disobedience*, *Eph. v. 9.* and *Children of the Devil*, *1 John iii. 10.* *Cursed Children*, *2 Pet. ii. 14.* *Strange Children*, *Hos. v. 7.* *Foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers Lusts and Pleasures, living in Envy and Malice, hateful and hating one another.* But after that the Kindness of God our Saviour appears, not by preceeding Works of Righteousness, which we have done, or which deserve it, but according to his Mercy he saves us by the washing of Regeneration, and by the renewing of the Holy Ghost, which he sheds on us through our Lord Jesus Christ, saith the Apostle, *Tit. iii. 3, 4, 5.* And thus we become the Children of God. Baptism prepares us, the Word of God convinces us, the Holy Ghost changes us, the Merits of Christ Jesus recommend us, our good Works testify of us, the Grace of God accepts of us, and at last Heaven receives us, and this is to be born of God, *1 Joh. iii. 9.* or to be born from above, *John iii. 3.* or rather to be born again, and that not of corruptible, but of incorruptible Seed, *1 Pet. i. 23.* So that there is a great deal more requir'd to make a Person a Child of God, than bare Nature, or natural Gifts. Here Grace is the chief Ingredient, even Grace scowring the Heart with supernatural Motions, or with Motions of Love; Grace manifested not only in Discourses, and Speeches, and Answers, but
Works

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Works and Actions, Divine and Spiritual, and edifying, and in the Eye of the World unreasonable, and contrary to the Rules of good Manners.

From all which it clearly appears, that the Nature and Honour of a Child of God doth not depend upon the Ranks and Qualities of Men, or outward Respects and Privileges: No, the poorest Man is capable of it, as much as he that doth cloath himself with Purple; and he that feeds upon the Crumbs that fall from *Dives's* Table may be a Child of God, as well as the greatest Prince, for God is no respecter of Persons: And whoever believes in him, as he hath reveal'd himself in *Christ Jesu*, Honours, Respects, and Loves, Obeys, and Trusts, and Delights in him, as a Good-natur'd Child is his Child, though with the Infant Saviour he should be forc'd to lie in a Manger, though his Bed were Straw, and his Attendants Mules, and Horses, and Cows, and Oxen, and such homely Animals.

If ever any thing deserv'd our Care and Industry, and seeking and looking after this, being a Child, or Children of God, deserves it. Indeed, an ordinary Diligence will yet procure this Privilege. There is the same Earnestness requisite here, which *Solomon* requires in getting spiritual Wisdom, *Prov. ii. 3.* *If thou criest after it, and liftest up thy voice for it; if thou seekest it as Silver, and searchest after it, as for hid Treasures, the Gate of Mercy will fly open, and God will admit*

admit you into the glorious Liberty of his Children, and if Children then Heirs, Heirs of Heaven, and Coheirs with Christ, and all things must work together for your good.

The right to Honour and Privilege, and Title of a Child of God, is the Foundation of the greatest Joy, and a true Sense of it doth a Man more good upon a Death-bed, than all the Drugs and Medicines which either *India* or *Arabia* yield. It comforts and supports in Tribulation, in Anguish, in Persecutions, in Crosses outward and inward, in Poverty, in Reproaches, in Contempt. It is an Argument of God's infinite Condescension, and gives the Soul a Prospect of the future Glory, and of her share in it, that let come what will, she can stand like a Rock at Sea, undaunted, undisturbed, unshaken, firm, and joyful, and taking a View of the Port and Harbour of Life and Immortality. For behold what manner of Love the Father hath bestow'd upon us, that we should be call'd the Sons of God, therefore the World knows us not, because it knew him not. Beloved, now we are the Sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be, but we know, that when he shall appear, we shall be like him, saith St. John, 1 John iii. 12.

But then it is impossible to be like him hereafter, except we endeavour to be like him here; and to make us so, is the great Design of our Religion, which brings in the

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II. Proposition. *That the great Design of our Religion is to make us like God, or like our Father which is in Heaven. That you may be the Children of your Father, or like your Father, as some old Copies read it.*

I know there have been various vain Pretences of Men, of the *Stoicks* of old particularly, who boasted of their *Philosophy*, that it was able to make Men like the *Deity* in Perfection; nay, their Vanity went so high, that they gloried not only of their *Wise Man's* Likeness, but Equality with the *Supream Being*; and they were of Opinion, that their *Wise Man* might be as perfect as God Almighty, and was not beholding to him that sits in Heaven for his Vertue. In a Word, *Jupiter* and their *Wise Man* were Fellows, and he enjoy'd an equal Right with him who is over all. But what the Apostle saith of the *Heathen Sages* in general, *Rom. i. 21.* may be applied to the *Stoicks* in particular; *Because when they knew God, they glorified him not as God neither were thankful, they became vain in their Imaginations, and their foolish Heart was darkned, professing themselves to be Wise, they became Fools.* So far were their Principles from making Men equal with God, that they were not able to make them tolerably like him; and all their Boastings and phantastick Conceits were meer Bubbles, which broke, and vanish'd with their own Emptiness.

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We have known Tyrannical Princes affect a Likeness too; I mean a Likeness to God Almighty, particularly *Nebuchadnezzar*, of whom we read, *Es. xiv. 13, 14.* that *He said in his Heart, I will ascend into Heaven, I will exalt my Throne above the Stars of God. I will sit also upon the Mount of the Congregation, in the sides of the North. I will ascend above the heights of the Clouds. I will be like the most High.* And to this purpose, *Daniel* told *Belshazzar* his Son, or Grandson, *Dan. v. 19.* *God gave thy Father, Nebuchadnezzar, such Majesty, that before him, as before a God, all People, Nations, and Languages trembled, and feared, and like a God, whom he would he slew, and whom he would he kept alive, whom he would he set up, and whom he would he put down.* But these are nothing but insolent Affectations of the Divine Grandeur, Follies, which Prosperous and Tyrannical Princes are apt to fall into, through the Flatteries of their Slaves and Parasites; a Likeness this, which our Religion hath nothing to do with.

There hath been a Succession of Men, for many Ages, in the *City built on seven Hills*, meer Cheats, and Fourbes, and Impostors, who have pretended such another Likeness; and that they have Power, like God, *to root out and to pull down, to destroy and to throw down, to build and to plant*, as it is said, *Jer. i. 10.* a meer effect of intollerable Pride and Haughtiness, and the proper Character of the *Man of Sin*, spoken of, *2 Thess. ii. 3, 4.*

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who exalts himself above all that is called God, i. e. above all Kings and Emperors, so that he as God, sits in the Temple of God, shewing himself, that he is God; a likeness this, than which nothing is more contrary to the Rules of the Gospel, and our Religion. Indeed, there are few Sinners but what pretend a likeness and imitation of God; for like God, they will take Vengeance on those who affront them, nay, rather than there should be no likeness betwixt God and them, they'll make God like themselves, false to his Word, and who threatens without any intent to punish. *These things hast thou done, saith God, and I kept silence, and thou thought'st that I was altogether such a one as thy self,* Psal. 1. 21.

I omit here the Gibberish, and phantastick Conceits of *Enthusiasts*, and *Quietists*, the Disciples of *Jacob Behmen* and *Molinos*, and the *Indian Joquies*, who talk of such a likeness, that they pretend to be Deify'd and Absorb'd by the Divine Essence.

Such a likeness our Gospel doth not teach, nor is this the Intent of that excellent Dispensation. The likeness our Religion aims at, is Contempt of the Riches, Pomp, and Glory of the World, the very thing we promise in our Baptism, and afterward think of no more: Admiring the Glory of Heaven, and of Holiness, above the outward Gaieties; Contempt of sinful Pleasures; hatred of Sin, even of the least, and of the very Appearances of Evil; Humility, and Good-

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Goodness, and Patience, and Mercy, and Charity, and doing good, and being kind even to our Enemies.

To make us like God, like our *Father which is in Heaven*, in these Particulars, is the true Design of our Religion: Nor is this only an Essay, an Attempt, or empty Wish, but it really and actually effects all this in honest and well disposed Minds, and to compass it.

1. Proposes to us an admirable Pattern, even the Lord *Jesús Christ*, who took our Nature upon him, and did all this to let us see, that Men who are his Followers, may arrive to this excellent Temper, and to these charming Qualifications. And to encourage us to it,

2. It sets before us very excellent Examples, even those of the Holy Apostles and Primitive Believers, who practis'd all this through *Christ* that strengthen'd them, and did it willingly, heartily, cheerfully.

3. It promises extraordinary Assistances, Helps, and Influences from Above, to enable us to arrive to this Likeness; Assistances, which may be had upon Groans unutterable, and strong Cries, and importunate Solicitations.

4. It displays, in lively Colours, the eternal Reward, and Bliss, and Recompence, which shall fall to the share of all those who heartily imitate their Father in Heaven, in the aforesaid Particulars.

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So that here you see your Task, as you are *Christians*, the Work you are call'd to, even to be *like your Father which is in Heaven*.

We see how fond and ambitious Courtiers are to be like their Kings; nay, we have known and seen, and read of some that have imitated their Princes, even to ridiculousness, in their Lameness and Defects, and Thousands do in their Sins and Vices. Nay, the Examples of Princes, we see, can make Men Good as well as Vicious. You'll say, so would God's Example, if he could be seen, but he being invisible, it works not. But though God be invisible, the Effects of his Providence are not; we see wicked Men, who are God's Enemies, they are not destroy'd, they live, and prosper, and Waters of a full Cup are wrung out to them, which as it could not come to pass without God's Order and Providence, so his Patience, Long-suffering, Meekness, Mercy, Charity, and Kindness even to Enemies, is manifest in these Instances. Shall we call our selves Children of this great King, and do nothing that's truly *like our Father which is in Heaven*? It's a wonderful Mistake, to think that all our Religion is only to make us just and honest in our Callings and Dealings, or to help us to abstain from some grosser Vices. If this were all, what need was there of the Incarnation of the Son of God? what need of all the Cost and Charges of Miracles, and the visible

visible Descent of the *Holy Ghost*? what need of all the mighty Manifestations of God we see, and read of, and pretend to believe?

No doubt, it is intended to make you greater Men than *Heathens* and *Infidels*, greater, I mean, in Goodness. And if it doth not, most certainly, you are Strangers to the Powers of it, and you have not yet learned the Truth as it is in *Jesus*, you are got no farther yet than the Rudiments of it, and, like Oyl, it is not entred yet into your Bowels. It is not only to make you obedient to Humane Laws, but to elevate your Souls above the ordinary Level, that you may by your Lives transcend those Laws, and do more than those Laws require.

We see the Vanity of Princes who affect the Title of *Grand* or *Great*. Why, your Religion will make you truly so, if you take Courage to live up to the Holy Rules of it, greater than all the mighty Conquerors, who while they have conquer'd Cities, have continued Slaves to their Lusts and Passions.

Behold here is a just Object of your Ambition. What is greater than God? What greater than your Father which is in Heaven? And in imitating him in the Qualifications aforesaid, you'll arrive to a Greatness Divine and God-like, and which will entitle you to the lofty Names *Christ* gives to them who follow him in the Regeneration: For he makes them *Kings* and *Priests to God and his Father*, Rev. i. 6. And

there is nothing can make us greater than being like him in Kindness, even to the Unthankful, and to the Evil; for he makes his *Sun rise on the Evil and the Good*, which leads me to the Third Proposition.

III. Prop. The greatness and vastness of God's Bounty is to be seen in making his *Sun shine upon the Evil and the Good*; and sending his *Rain upon the Just and Unjust*. A Bounty infinite like himself, and not to be looked upon but with admiration; and that

Upon the account of the Insensibilities of the Wicked, and Bad, and Unjust. To see how God is affronted daily by Oaths, by Curses, by Blasphemies, by Lewdness, by Perjuries, by Profaneness, Atheism, Hypocrisy, and by Sins, which a good Man can scarce name without trembling; yet on these Wretches, whom, by right, Hell-fire should devour, his Sun doth shine, and his Rain drops down. His Sun warms them and revives them. His Rain enriches their Pastures. Instead of Sun-shine, he might bury them in Darkness, and instead of Rain to water their Grounds he might rain on them Fire and Brimstone, and a burning Tempest, even the Portion of the Sinner's Cup.

It's true, he will do all this at last, when the Measure of their Impenitence is fulfilled; but for the present, his Light smiles upon them, and his Heaven distils gentle Showers, to make their Land fruitful, and

doth

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doth not this shew the vastness of his Bounty?

2. Upon the account of his Power, it were as easie. Without all peradventure, it were as easie to him to withhold his Sun and Rain from the Wicked, as it was to enlighten the Land of *Goshen*, while the *Egyptians* were frighted with thick Darknes; or as it was to dry up the Red-Sea for the *Israelites*, while *Pharaoh* and his Host were drowned in the Waters; or as it was to keep the Flames of the Furnace from burning the three Young-Men in *Daniel*, those very Flames which consumed the other Men, who were thrown into the Oven. But his Mercy prevails above his Power, and that shews the Greatness of it.

We must suppose God hath some farther Design in these Providences, than merely to discover the Profuseness of his Bounty.

One Reason is, to engage them to love him who is so kind to them. Love is so natural, so rational a Return for Kindnesses, that all who are beneficent to others do expect it. And how easie a matter were it, even for a wicked Man, who is not irrecoverably stupid, to reflect, when he lies basking in the Sun, or lets in the Splendor of that glorious Planet into his Rooms, or sees how it makes his Trees, and Plants, and Flowers grow, and how it gilds his Gardens and his Fields; how easie, I say, were it for him to reflect, "Whence comes this Sun-shine, do not these Rays descend
" from

“ from the Father of Lights, whose Ways
 “ I have derided, whose Words and Ordi-
 “ nances I have despised, and whose Pre-
 “ cepts I have laugh’d at? What Ingrati-
 “ tude is this? Would I use a Friend so?
 “ And what? put these Indignities upon
 “ my best and greatest Friend? See how
 “ his Love to me shines in that glorious
 “ Sun, and shall I return Hatred for his
 “ Love? The like Reflections might easily
 be made upon the Blessing of the Rain.
 But I proceed.

2. It is to lead them to Repentance.
 The Sun which comforts the evil Man,
 his Body and his Grounds, is to put him in
 mind of his Duty, to warm his Soul with
 serious Considerations, till they melt his
 Heart into Remorse and Compunction.
 And the Rain, even the former and the lat-
 ter Rain, is a Remembrancer, and points at
 the Shower of Tears he is to weep for his
 Sins and Offences. So that the Sun and
 Rain are School-masters to lead him to
 Love and Repentance; and that these are
 the Ends God hath in these Dispensations,
 is evident from, *Hos. ii. 8. Acts xiv. 15, 16,*
17. Acts xvii. 27. And oh! that such of you
 as have hitherto been careless Observers of
 these Ends, would be perswaded to make
 this Rain and Sun-shine the Ladder for your
 Thoughts to rise, and your Meditations to
 ascend, and contemplate the infinite Good-
 ness of God, who vouchsafes this Sun and
 Rain; and in doing so, presents you with

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a powerful Motive to offer him your reasonable Service, that *the Sun of Righteousness may shine upon you with healing under his Wings*; and his warmer Mercies may come down upon you as *Showers upon the mown Grass*.

As common as these Blessing are, they do not come by Chance, but are Gifts of the great Sovereign of the World; and if they be Gifts, the least they deserve is Acknowledgment; and how do we acknowledge them, if we dishonour God by our Sins? But this is not all; besides these, God hath other Ends in vouchsafing his Rain and Sunshine, even to the worst of Men, Ends in which the Pious, the Serious, the Religious are particularly concern'd. And,

1. It concerns us to admire the infinite Patience of God; his Patience to the Stubborn and Obstinate, and his Kindness and Charity to them. Not only to see and take notice of God in the Providence, but to extol his Munificence, to praise, to adore, to magnifie his universal Compassion, and to speak of his wonderful Works, to sing of his Mercy, and to use this very Instance of Sun and Rain, as an Argument to unconverted Sinners, to perswade them to a conscientious walking with God. Indeed, here is a large Field for our Thoughts to expatiate in, and to make useful Remarks on his Power, Wisdom, and Goodness.

2. It

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2. It concerns us to imitate the Patience, and Kindness, and Charity of that God, who makes his Sun rise upon the Good and Bad, and sends Rain upon the Just and Unjust. This is the principal Drift and Design of our Saviour in giving these Instances, and it is to furnish us with Antidotes against Passion, and Revenge, and Hatred, and Malice, and Uncharitableness, when we apprehend our selves wrong'd, or injur'd, or unkindly dealt with; I say, it is to furnish us with Antidotes against Passion and Revenge, from the most obvious and familiar Objects and Occurrences: So that whenever you are provok'd to uncharitable Thoughts, and to a strange Behaviour to those who have wrong'd you, you need go no farther than the Sun that shines upon your Heads, and the Rain you see distil from the Clouds. Think this Sun shines upon the greatest of God's Enemies, and does good to their Fields and Persons, and shall I feel no Warmth, no Fire, no Flames of Compassion to my Adversary? The Rain that falls here is God's Rain, and the Man that curses him to his Face, participates of the Benefits of it; and shall I be in a Rage against the Man who hath affronted me, and withdraw my Charity from him? God doth not, and why should I?

3. It concerns us seriously to reflect on what God designs to do for his dear Children hereafter, and from the Blessings he bestows on the Wicked here, to argue what

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Treasures are laid up for Men of a better Temper. If God be so kind to his very Enemies, what will he be to his Friends? If those that hate him enjoy so much of his Bounty, what may those look for who love him? If his Goodness be so great to his Foes, how great must be his Kindness to his Favourites?

Great indeed! *How excellent is thy Loving-kindness, O Lord, toward them that fear thee, and put their trust in thee before the Sons of Men! They shall be abundantly satisfied with the Fatness of thy House, and thou shalt make them drink of the Rivers of thy Pleasure! For with thee is the Fountain of Life, and in thy Light we shall see Light.*

This must needs be a very comfortable Consideration to all that by patient continuance in Well-doing, seek for Glory, Honour, and Immortality. Rain and Sunshine, and the common Blessings of this Life, are not the proper Rewards God intends you: These are Mercies design'd chiefly for his Slaves and meaner Servants. They are greater, richer, and nobler Blessings that are appointed for his Friends and Children. *Eye hath not seen, and Ear hath not heard, and Heart cannot conceive, what God hath prepared for them that love him.* Grieve not ye in whom the Fruits of the Spirit do appear, that God doth not give you the Blessings of his Left-hand, the Blessings of Men, who have their Portion in this Life. If he should put you off with these, you would

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would be miserable. The Joys Above, the Triumphs of Paradise, the Felicity of Angels, the Festivals of Heaven, the eternal Enjoyments of God, the everlasting Rest, the endless Beatitude in your Father's House: These are the Portions of his Children. This World indeed is inhabited by his Friends, but the greater Part of those who dwell in the Earth are his Enemies. Among these good Men live as Strangers and Pilgrims, but they are higher, larger, and loftier Mansions, that are prepared for them, and *when their earthly House of this Tabernacle shall be dissolv'd, there will fall to their share, a Building of God, a House not made with Hands, eternal in the Heavens.*

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 SERMON XXXVII.

St. Matth. Ch. V. Ver. 46, 47.

For if you love them which love you, what Reward have you? Do not even the Publicans the same? And if ye salute your Brethren only, what do you more than others? Do not even the Publicans so?

LAWS are best understood by the Preamble, because that gives an account of the occasion, to these Words, by the preceding. Among the Rules of Holy Living, prescrib'd by our Soviour to his Disciples, in this Chapter, that of loving our Enemies, blessing them that curse us, and doing good to them that hate us, and praying for them which despitefully use us, is most remarkable.

He was sensible, Flesh and Blood would raise Objections against this Duty, and therefore he backs it with Arguments great and

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and powerful, to let us see how equitable and reasonable it is.

In the preceding Verse he sets before us the Example of God, who receives greater Affronts and Injuries, and Abuses from sinful Men, than one Man can possibly receive from another. And yet as ill as that Supream Being is used, *he lets his Sun rise upon the Evil and the Good, and sends Rain upon the Just and Unjust.* The next Motive is taken from the Nature of the *Christian* Discipline, which transcends all other Religions in the World, and whose very Design it is to raise Men above the common Level of Nature and Education; and consequently requires greater Degrees of Love and Goodness to Men, than natural Men, *Heathens*, and Sinners, and *Publicans* usually pay; for *if ye love them which love you, what Reward have ye, do not even the Publicans the same? and if ye salute your Brethren only, what do ye more than others, do not even the Publicans so?*

The *Publicans*, here mention'd, were Persons that sat at the Receipt of Custom, or receiv'd the Customs due to the Roman Emperors in *Palestina*, from Commodities Imported or Exported. Such a one was *Matthew* the Writer of this Gospel, *Matth. ix. 9.* and *Zachew*, *Luk. xix. 2.* i. e. before they were converted; for though *Tertullian* will not allow, that any *Jews* were Custom-House-Men, or would suffer themselves to be employ'd in the Receipt of Customs,

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stoms, yet that in this Point is under a very great Mistake, is evident from the Examples of *Matthew* and *Zacchaeus*, who were both *Jews*, and of the Stock of *Abraham*, *Mar. ii. 14. Luk. xix. 9.*

It's possible there might not be so many *Jews* of that Profession, as there were *Greeks* or *Romans*, yet that even the *Jews* did sometimes court and accept of these Employments, and personally discharg'd them, what has been alledg'd is as good as Demonstration.

These *Publicans* were properly Gatherers or Receivers of the Customs, or a kind of Under-Farmers. For the *Roman* Government, under which the *Jews* at this Time were, used to let the Customs of the several Countries under their Dominion to Farm, or to be farmed by the Noblemen, Knights, and Gentlemen of *Rome*. These undertook to pay the Government a certain Sum for the Customs of such a Country. And these Farmers had Officers under them, who either farmed the Customs of them again, or were at the trouble of Gathering and Receiving them; whereby they had great Opportunities, and were under very great Temptations to Cheat and Exact upon the Merchants and others they had to deal with; and such were the *Publicans* in the Text. And therefore they were commonly look'd upon as Extortioners, Unjust, Unrighteous, and Oppressors; and among the *Jews* particularly they had so ill a Name,

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that they were called *Sinners* by way of eminency; and a *Heathen* and a *Publican* were with them convertible Terms. Nay, the *Pharisees* seem'd to exclude them from all hopes of Salvation, which was one great Reason, I suppose, why many of them, I mean of these *Publicans*, did so readily close and join with *Christ*, when he preach'd to them Repentance, and offer'd them the Kingdom of Heaven.

But though they were guilty of great Oppression and Extortion, and false Accusation, and liv'd by it, and by that means lay expos'd to other Vices, as one Sin seldom goes alone; yet they were not so bad, (those who were *Jews* especially) as to neglect the common Duties of Religion, or the ordinary Offices of Civility and Humanity, which makes our Saviour say and affirm, that *they loved those who were loving and friendly to them, and saluted those who were their Brethren* and Acquaintance, and were civil to Men of their own Religion.

This being premised, the Observations the *Text* affords, may be reduced to these Three Propositions.

I. *Even wicked Men do and may perform the common Duties of Religion and Morality.*

II. *Those who would be Christians indeed, must do more than carnal Men in Matters of Religion and Morality.*

III. *If they do not, they have no Reward.*

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I begin with the first, which imports, that *even wicked Men do, and may perform the common Duties of Religion and Morality*, a Truth plainly intimated in the *Text*, for the *Publicans* were Men wicked and scandalous, who got their Livelihood by Cheating, Lying, Defrauding, false Accusation, &c. It's true, there lay no necessity upon them to do so; for *St. John the Baptist* told some of them who came to him for Advice, that they might continue in their Calling, provided they would *exact no more than was appointed them*, Luk. iii. 13. but Greediness after Gain, and a Desire to be Rich, tempted them to these infamous Sins. Notwithstanding all this, they were loving, and civil, and kind, and courteous, to those who were so to them, and, without all peradventure, went into the Temple, and joined with the Congregation; for so we read, *Luk. xviii. 10.* And they asked their Neighbours, *how they did*, which is call'd, saluting their Brethren.

And indeed, our own Experience is sufficient Witness of the Truth of this Observation: A Man who gives himself to Drinking, we see often, is very Just in his Dealings, and would not wrong a Child; another who is Cholerick and Passionate, a Slave to Wrath and Anger when provok'd, shall be very Charitable; another that, may be, lives in Fornication and Uncleanneſs, shall be ready to do kind Offices to Relations and others; and he who Cheats and

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Defrauds Men, whether in Trade, or otherwise, goes to Church, and says his Prayers, and may be will venture upon the tremendous Ordinance of the *Eucharist*; and a very debauch'd Person is very often very punctual to his Word, and true to his Promises; all which is agreeable to what we read in Scripture; *Ahab*, as wicked as he was, yet hearing *Elijah's* Threatning, he rent his Cloaths, and put Sackcloth upon his Flesh, and fasted, and lay in Sackcloth, and went softly, 1 Kings xxi. 27. The Jews, *Jer. vii.* 9, 10. they stole, they murder'd, they committed Adultery, they swore falsely, and burnt Incense to *Baal*, yet came very orderly, and stood, and pray'd before the Lord in the Temple, and were very zealous for the Church and Temple. *Herod* was a Person wicked with a Witness; yet when *John the Baptist* reprov'd him, he did many things, observ'd, and fear'd the Good Man, and had a very great Veneration for him; nay, and made Conscience of his Oath, a sinful one, it's true, yet an Oath, *Mark vi.* 20, 26.

Indeed, one would wonder how Vice and Vertue should lodge together in one Breast, the rather, because *St. James* says, Chap. iii. 9. *Can a Fountain, at the same place, send forth bitter Water and sweet?* yet we see nothing is more common, and as the *Samaritans*, 2 Kings xvii. 33. *They feared the Lord, and served their own Gods*; so most wicked Men serve both God and the Devil, are *Votaries* to the Prince of Darknes, and yet

yet are willing to do something in Religion and Morality; and the Reasons of it are briefly these.

1. *Conviction.* Abundance of such Men are convinc'd, that Religion is necessary, and that they are not safe without something of it. Whether it be, that they think that little Devotion they have, will, like a Spell, keep the Devil from hurting them; or whether they hope, that by that little Sprinkling of Morality, they shall compensate God, and make him amends for the Sins they allow themselves; something of it they think is necessary. For though they make a shift to stop the Mouth of Conscience, yet, like an importunate Creditor, it will dun them, and therefore some Shew they must make of Religion, to satisfy its Importunity.

2. *Its Interest.* Many times that is the Cause of it. There happen to be Times when Religion is in Fashion; and we may remember when it was the Way to get Places and Preferments. Some worldly Advantages are sometimes to be got by it, and it proves a Security to their Places, or Trades, or Employments. *Gebazi* got considerably by it, and being Officious and Complaisant to his Devout Master, the *Syrian* General presented him with Silver, and Raiments. Religion is a Thing pleasing to good Men, even the very Shadow of it; and where they see something of Devotion, it's a Motive to converse, and deal with the Pro-

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fellors of it, though some Vices be mingled
with the Profession.

3. *Care of their Reputation*, is another Cause.
As vicious as this Age is, a Man very viti-
ous is a contemptible Wretch: If he have
an Estate, his Flatterers and Dependants
may fawn upon him, and cringe to him,
but Men of Consideration cannot but de-
spise him in their Hearts. Something of
Vertue and Goodness gives a Man Credit in
the World, and his Neighbours do ordina-
rily shew him more respect than otherwise
they would do. The Praise of Men, as it is
sometimes the Cause of denying *Christ*, so it
is sometimes the Cause of confessing him,
and Honour, and Reputation, may make a
Man, at least, seemingly Religious, when all
the Arguments of Eternity cannot work
upon him.

4. *Custom and Education* is another preva-
lent Motive. This is as great an Ingredi-
ent of those little Shews of Religion and
Morality in wicked Men as any; and if
some looser People were ask'd, why they
come to Church, and say their Prayers,
and perform some other Duties of Religion,
if they would answer seriously, they could
give no other Reason but this, because they
have been educated into it, and it's the
Custom of the Country, from which to
vary would be a little odd, and imperti-
nent.

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So that from what hath been said, you may safely infer, and carry this Maxim home with you, and think, and ruminate upon it, *That the external Duties of Religion, and a little Smack of Vertue does not excuse or free a Man from the Guilt of being wicked.*

It is your living in a Sin which God hath peremptorily forbid in his Word, and cherishing, making much of it, and keeping it warm, that makes you wicked; and all the external Services of Prayer, Hearing coming to Church, &c. you pay to God, cannot cover that Sin, or make you pure in his Sight, who is of purer Eyes than to behold Iniquity.

For that Sin you live in, makes you impure in the Sight of God, and *to the Impure and Defiled, is nothing Pure*, Tit. i. 15. That Impurity dashes all that little Goodness which is in you. It drowns the Acts of Devotion which you perform. It is a Worm that kills all the seeming Vertues that grow about you, *i. e.* makes them ineffectual.

That Sin you live in, is maintaining Rebellion against God; and therefore all your pretended Obedience is insignificant. It is presumption, and you'll maintain it, come what will of it; and how can God Almighty like any thing you do? It is Enmity against God, and how can he be your Friend? It is like a rotten Sheep, that infects the whole Flock. It is an evil Root that sends up a Bitterness into all the Boughs and Branches that grow from it.

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It is true, God is a Lover of Goodness, but the Sin you live in makes all your Goodness Counterfeit, and a Sacrifice, which is abomination to the Lord; that very Sin you will not part with, impoisons that Morality, and those Acts of Religion you make a shew of. That very Sin makes you Wicked, and the seeming Goodness that is about you, cannot change the Nature of it. Were it so, that an Ounce of Goodness could counter-balance a whole Talent of Wickedness; much might be said for blending and joining God and *Belial*; but we have not so learned *Christ*: And if he that wilfully offends in one, is guilty of all, it cannot be that God will pass by that Sin we allow our selves in, for, and in consideration of the Acts of Morality and Religion we perform. It's true, of *Charity* it's said, *that it shall cover a multitude of Sins*, Jam. v. 19, 20. But the Meaning is not, that the Charity, or Alms of a wicked Man, shall blot out the multitude of Sins he cherishes, but that the Charity which a good *Christian* exercises in the Conversion of a Sinner, is a Means whereby the Sinner is brought to a true Repentance, and entitled to the Grace and Love of God in *Christ Jesus*, which pardons all his Transgressions, and covers the multitude of his Sins. All which shews, that a *Christian* must do more, which leads me to the Second Proposition.

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II. *Those who would be Christians indeed, must do more than carnal Men in Matters of Religion and Morality. For if you salute your Brethren only, what do you more than others?* saith our Saviour here. Were the former Proposition duly consider'd, this would be practis'd better. It is a vulgar Error, *That a little Religion goes a great Way.* And were it believ'd, that Men escape not the Brand of wicked Men, by the Formalities of Religion they practise, while they espouse some forbidden Lust or other, they would certainly do more than others. I am very sensible of the great Mistakes that arise from comparing our selves with others; but the reason of it is, because the Comparisons are not rightly made. There are Degrees of Wickedness and Impiety; and I know abundance think, because they are not quite so bad as others, they do more than others; and because they do not run with others into the same excess of Riot, they take themselves to be tolerable Saints. But such Comparisons are false as well as odious; and there is nothing hinders Men more from a vigorous Progress in Goodness, than these preposterous Comparisons. All that can be inferr'd from another Man's being more wicked than we, is only this, that there are Degrees of Sin; but not, that I am therefore safe, because I am not come up to his Excess and Extravagance in offending God. When our Saviour therefore obliges us to do more than *Heathens*, more than Carnal
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and natural Men in Matters of Religion and Morality, his Meaning is not, that all we are to study is, to be less vicious than they; for though this, in some Sense, may be true, yet considering the Nature of the Gospel, we must needs conclude, *Christ* in saying so, had respect to the following Particulars.

1. Since departing from Iniquity is made the Character of a *Christian* indeed, 2 Tim. ii. 19. no doubt this is the Character too, which doth distinguish him from a carnal Man; and he doth more than they, if he actually departs from every Sin forbidden by the Gospel, for then he ceases to be carnal, and walks after the Spirit, and as every *Christian* ought to be, becomes a new Creature, and departing in his Affections from all Iniquity forbidden, he doth more than those who depart may be only from some Sins that would make them scandalous, and securely allow themselves in others.

2. A carnal Man, in Matters of Religion and Morality, acts, for the most part, according to his natural Temper, Interest, Passion, and Appetite; in all which Particulars we must do more than they, *i.e.* act contrary to all these. A carnal Man is naturally, may be, envious or malicious, he continues so, there being no Principle in him to turn the Byass; we must do more than he; and if our Temper be so, it must be subdu'd and overcome with Rejoycings at the Good, and Parts, and Gifts, and Abilities,

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bilities, and Blessings of our Neighbours. It is a carnal Man's Interest to comply with his potent Neighbours, when they curse, or swear, or talk lewdly. As much as it may be our Interest to comply, we must shew our Dislike and Abhorrency. A carnal Man his Passion provokes him to bitter and reviling Language; whatever Inclinations to Passion we may have, no such corrupt Communication must come out of our Mouths. A carnal Man's Appetite inclines him to eat and drink immoderately, and to crave every Thing which is pleasing to the Flesh, and which he hath means to reach, or come by. We must prescribe Laws and Bounds to those Desires, and study Moderation, and Temperance, and Modesty, and Decency, and then we do more than others.

3. In Matters of Religion, what external Services a carnal Man performs, our Care must be, that our Hearts and inward Man be affected with them, that the Inside be devout as well as the Outside; and that the Mind perform it's Part as well as the Lips and Hands; and that an inward Sense go along with the Devotion, we express without: A carnal Man's Lips only pray, our Care must be to *cry with our whole Heart*, Psal. cxix. 145. and then we do more than others.

4. In Matters of Religion, what a carnal Man does out of sinister Ends, we must do for Ends great and laudable, and acceptable
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to God, *ver.* 9. A carnal Man receives the Holy Sacrament, may be, to satisfy the Law, and to secure his Employ, or Office, that's the principal Motive of his Coming; and if it had not been for such an occasion he had not come; our Care must be to receive it with an Intent to enrich our Hearts and Lives with Faith, and Love, and good Works, and Courage against Temptations, and then we do more than others.

5. In Matters of Religion, what a carnal Man doth partially, and by halves, we must do with Integrity and Impartiality. This may justly be said of the Religious Services and Moralities of a carnal Man, all is done by halves. He either doth one Duty, and neglects another, or shuns one Sin, and wallows in another; and even the Vertue he makes a Shew of, wants the better half, *viz.* a true Principle of the Love of God. An equal and uniform Piety is that which is most rational, and consequently most pleasing to God; and in this we are to do more than others.

6. Particularly in Love, and Acts of Charity and Kindness. A carnal Man loves those who love him, and is civil to those who are civil to him; and he very rarely goes farther. Our Care must be to do Good to those that do not love us, and to be civil even to those that are not so to us; and all this, because our Light, our Motives, our Rewards, our Revelations, and Encouragements

ments exceed, and go beyond what *Publicans*, and natural men have, or ever had. And this is to do more than others. However, if this Account be not satisfactory, I am sure the inquisitive *Christian* may easily see and understand wherein he is to do more than others, if he will but impartially read, and take a View of this Chapter. For as the Precepts here given are levell'd against corrupt Nature, so to live up to these Rules, is to do more than others, more than natural Men, more than *Publicans* and *Sinners*.

And what I have laid down here, ruins that common Plea, *Why should I do more than others?* Why? As your Circumstances and Conditions are various, so they become Motives to do more than others. Because thou art a *Christian*, thou ought'st to do more than others. Because the Son of God himself hath come and spoke to thee in his Gospel, therefore thou ought'st to do more than *Heathens* and *Infidels*. Because thou enjoyest greater Mercies, and thine Eyes have seen greater Deliverances than others, thou ought'st to do more than thy Neighbours, whose Mercies are less, and whose Deliverances are not so astonishing. Because thou livest under richer Means of Grace than others: Because thou hast had stronger and more powerful Motions of God's Spirit than others, therefore thou ought'st to do more than others: Because thou mak'st a greater Profession of Religion than others, thou ought'st to do more than others.

Nay,

Nay, thou hast obliged thy self in thy *Baptism*, in the *Eucharist*, upon a *Sick-Bed*, and on other Occasions, to do more than others, to be sure, more than thy carnal careless Neighbours do, that Hear, and Pray, and have some Vertues mingled with their Vices.

You that have repented of a very lewd and flagitious Life, and been converted from the Power of Satan unto God, ought particularly to do more than others, for you have sinn'd more than others, you expect more should be forgiven you; you have formerly hated God more than others, and therefore ought to love him more than others.

Ye who have more Time, more Leisure than others, you ought to spend more in Religious Retirements than others.

Ye to whom God hath given greater Means and Estates than others, ought to express your Charity to distressed *Christians*, in greater Instances than others. In a Word, The common Duties of Religion are to be distinguish'd from the greater. The common are such, as both the Light of Nature, and the Gospel command, and which Infidels, as well as we, perform. The greater are those which the Gospel doth particularly bind upon the Consciences of *Christ's* Followers; and these are the proper Tasks of *Christians*.

Upon

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Upon a Death-Bed thou cry'st, *I thank God I have wrong'd no body.* Do not even *Heathens* and *Philosophers* the same? Thou rejoicest, thou pleatest thy self with this, that thou hast been just and honest in all thy Dealings, do not even the *Brahmines* and *Indians* the same? I do not deny, but these are good Things; but what is all this to *Christianity*, which is a higher Discipline, and a sublimer Dispensation? What is all this to Faith in *Christ Jesus*, which is to purify your Hearts, and to make *Christ* and his Precepts, and Promises, and Ordinances, and the Benefits of his Death, Resurrection, and Ascension, and Intercession sweet, and pleasant, and amiable to you?

We will allow, that you pay, and endeavour to pay every Man their own; that you lend, and give, and are kind to your Friends, and who do, and are so to you; and that you wrong, and abuse, and injure no Man that lets you alone; but in doing so, what do ye more than those who never heard of *Christ*? Hath God given you suitable Encouragements to do more than others, and will not Angels, and good Men, and your own Consciences, cry shame upon you in the last Day, because ye have not done more than others? Nay, it were well, if many of us did but so much as others, so much as honest *Heathens* do, so much as innocent *Barbarians* do, who love those that love them; and are civil to those who are so to them?

How

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How many of us are there, who are ungrateful, base, inhumane, uncivil, unthankful to those who love them, and express their Love in various Acts of Kindness to their Souls and Bodies? and if *the Righteous be scarcely saved, where will the Wicked and Sinner appear?* But if all this will not prevail, I must try one Motive more, which will lead me to the last Proposition.

III. *If those who would be, or think themselves good Christians do not more than carnal Men in Matters of Religion and Morality, they have no Reward. For if ye love them which love you, what Reward have you?* I need not tell you, that Questions of this Nature are equivalent to Negatives, for this is a common Way of speaking in all Languages; so we ordinarily say, *If you will not work, who will take care of you? i.e. No body will.* When I say we have no Reward, if we do not more than others, I do not mean a Temporal Reward, for this is given even to Hypocrites; and we may lawfully conclude, that the Temporal Deliverances, Protections, and Preservations, which happen to wicked Men, came upon them for some good thing, they have done, either in Religion or Morality, or in promoting the Glory of God, which in all probability is the Reason why the *Mahometan* Religion, and particularly the *Ottoman* Empire hath flourish'd so long, because they have destroy'd Idolatry in the World, and have done some other Services to God's People.

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It's the everlasting Reward I treat of here; and our Saviour aims at no less. If we do not more than others, we shall have no greater Reward than others; if we do more our Reward will be greater.

And here, for your Encouragement to do more than others, according to the Rules before laid down, more than carnal Men ordinarily do, who mingle some Acts of Religion and Morality, with their wilful Sins, give me leave to propose to you these following Considerations.

1. Then would ye be put off with a Temporal Reward? What? be put off with this, when you hear a pious *David* pray, *to be deliver'd from Men, who have their Portion in this Life*, Psal. xvii. 14. were there no other Life, when this is ended, no marvel if a Temporal Recompence did content you. But when you profess and own an approaching Eternity, to make a Temporal Reward only, the Object of your Hopes and Desires, is strangely Irrational. What! Content your selves with Corn, and Wine, and Oyl, when an everlasting Kingdom is to be had? When you see the Crown of Glory glittering a-far off, which the eternal God holds out to you as a Motive? What! Content your selves with Trash, when Gates of Pearl, and a City of Gold is set before you?

2. When you come to lie upon a Death-Bed, do not you desire an everlasting Reward? No doubt ye do, your Ministers and

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your Neighbours hear you say so. But how uncomfortable must be that Desire, when your Consciences shall fly in your Faces, and tell you, that your Desires are groundless, that this is desiring the End without the Means, and the Reward at Night, and the Favour of the good Man of the House, when you have been loath to bear the Heat and Burden of the Day.

3. If you do not more than others, is it not a certain Sign that you do not heartily believe an eternal Reward? What! Believe it, and do nothing for it? Yes, something ye do, as much as some of your indifferent Neighbours do, but that's the very thing *Christ* finds fault with, because you stop there, where Men of no great Sense of Religion stop. It's true, all the doing in the World cannot deserve this everlasting Reward; but since doing more than *Publicans* and *Sinners* is the Condition to which God hath annex'd this eternal Reward, will you neglect the Condition, without which you cannot be sure of that Reward?

4. When in the last Day ye shall see those excluded from the Kingdom of Heaven, who were loath to step farther than their Friends and Acquaintance in the Way to Happiness, those particularly who thought it sufficient to be kind only to those who were kind to them: Will not you wish that you had done more than they? But what will Wishes signify in that Day, when the Time of Sowing, and Planting, and Working

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ing is past? Now you have an Opportunity of shewing your extraordinary Zeal, and Love, and Fervour, and Charity, and Endeavours to do more than others.

Lay hold, and remember, we entreat you, in *Christ's* stead, to lay hold on the present Opportunity, and let the eternal Reward tempt you; the Reward invisible indeed; but as sure, as certain, as infallible as the Great God, who hath promised it. Say not, this doing more than others is an endless thing; for at this rate we must do more than every Man we see or hear of, or converse withal, a thing enough to make a Man distracted with Religion. No my Friends, there is no danger of that; the Persons beyond whom you are to go, are chiefly carnal, careless, indifferent Men, who have a low Opinion of Religion, and do no more in their Matters than is consistent with their Interest, and Honour, and Reputation, and Ease, and Temper, and Profit, and Sensual Pleasures. Cross yourselves in all these, and do more than Flesh and Blood, and Nature, and Custom, and Education would prompt you to; and as you excel others in Temporal and Spiritual Advantages, labour still to do more than they, especially where you see they are defective; and let all be done according to the Directions of the *Text*, and this Chapter, not ceasing to implore God's powerful Arm; and the Time will come, when you shall Sing, and Triumph, and Rejoyce

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more than others, and when others shall be
Judged, Disgraced, Despised, and Rejected,
you will sit on Thrones, judging the Tribes
of *Israel*. *Amen.*

SER.

SERMON XXXVIII

St. Matth. Ch. V. Ver. 46, 47.

*For if you love them which love you,
what Reward have you? Do not even
the Publicans the same? And if ye
salute your Brethren only, what do you
more than others? Do not even the
Publicans so?*

I Thought I had done with these Words,
but upon a Review of the Text, there
appear several Things which will re-
quire our farther Disquisition and Ex-
amination. Our Saviour's principal Design
in these Words, I think I have sufficiently
explain'd in the last Discourse; his princi-
pal Design, I say, which is, to shew, that in
Matters of Love, Charity, Kindness, and
Civility, we are to do more than others,
more than *Heathens* and *Infidels*, more than
Carnal Men, and according to the Rules
and Measures of Analogy, I extended the

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Command to other collateral Duties of Religion and Morality.

But I find, that while I have pressed doing more than others, I have forgot to urge some of you at least, to do so much as others; and while I have taught you to go beyond *Publicans* and carnal Men, I have overlook'd the Duties and good Things suppos'd in the *Text* to be in *Publicans*, and carnal Men, which are *loving those that love them, and being kind, and civil, and courteous to those who are so to them, and doing good to those who do good to them.*

Indeed, to recommend to you such Duties as these, seems to be a thing altogether needless and superfluous, as needless as to teach People to Trade one with another, or to Eat when they are Hungry, or to Drink when they are Dry. But if we look abroad and consider the *Christian* World, as it appears to us now, we shall find, that even these lesser Duties are trampled upon as well as the greater; and as impossible as it may seem to be, not to love those who love us, it will appear, from the Sequel, that there are not a few, even among our selves, *Christians*, such as they are, who break through the Obligation of this Duty, and may be justly charged with wilful Omission and Neglect, even of these common Offices which Nature, Custom, and Education teaches.

Indeed, it is a great Disparagement to our Religion, at least to the Professors of it, that they, who for the Time they have lived in the Church, should be able to digest the strongest Meat, should stand in need of Milk; and those who should be able to teach others, should have occasion, or lie under a necessity to be taught the common Principles of *Heathen Divinity*. But so it is, and to that pass are things come, that we are forced to teach People the first Rudiments of natural *Theology*; so incapable, or so unfit, are many to be instructed in the higher Lessons of *Christianity*.

To love and do good to those, who love and do good to us, is a pure natural Principle, and it looks a little impertinent to prove the necessity of it, because it is a Point all Men take for granted; yet that I may not seem to leave out any thing that should have been said, and for your fuller Conviction and Satisfaction, I shall

- I. Consider the reasonableness of this Principle.
- II. Enquire what Persons they are who act against this natural Principle.
- III. Examine what it is that makes Men sink so low beneath Publicans and Heathens, and act against this Principle of Nature.

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I. *The Reasonableness of this Principle of loving, and doing good to those who love and do good to us.* And it will appear from the following Particulars:

III. Not to love those that love us, or not to be civil, kind, and courteous to those who are so to us, tends to the Ruin and Destruction of Humane Society. Mutual and reciprocal Kindnesses are the Solder of Humane Life; and without these, the World would soon become a Habitation of Savages; Trade and Commerce would quickly cease, and the Condition of Mankind, like the *Leviathan's* State of Nature, become a State of perpetual War: This would encrease Animosities, and set at variante Father and Son, and the Daughter against her Mother, and the Daughter-in-law against her Mother-in-law, and open a Gap to infinite Quarrels and Dissentions; for as nothing sowers our Spirits more than Unkindnesses from those whom we have been kind to; so if this proceeded to an universal Custom, Love and Charity would be destroy'd, and with that the Peace and Order of Common-Wealths or Kingdoms. This would alienate Mens Affections one from another, and this would proceed to Hatred, that Hatred to Revenge, that Revenge to Destruction. In a Word, this would breed the greatest Confusion in Families, Cities, and Provinces, and nothing would be more miserable than the Children of Men. In the worst of Times, when
Vice

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Vice and Impiety abounds, and triumphs, and Religion is scorned, and lies neglected. This Principle of loving those who love us, doth yet uphold Humane Societies; but were this Cement abolish'd or abandon'd, the whole Frame must fall into Disorder, and break into a shapeless *Chaos*.

2. To love those who love us, is a Dictate not only of Reason, but of Instinct too; and therefore Instances of it are to be found even in Beasts, and Brutes, and irrational Creatures. I am not very apt to believe all Passages in History, concerning Beasts, and their wonderful Kindnesses to those who have been kind to them, yet some are so well attested, that I cannot forbear giving credit to them. *Andronicus* his Lyon is famous, and what Wolves, and Tygers, and Serpents have done to the holy *Hermites* of old, are things not to be slighted. However, let's cast our Eyes upon what our own Experience doth furnish us with; we all know how wonderfully kind Dogs are to those who feed them, and make much of them; and there are such Examples of Fidelity and Love to their Masters, in these Animals, that many a Man may blush to see himself outdone by those despicable Creatures. Nay, wild Beasts are serviceable and obliging to those of their own Kind, that are so to them; so that not to love those who love us, is to be worse than Beasts and Brutes, whom Instinct, and the Weight of Sense forces into this Duty.

Nay,

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Nay, 3. The Devils themselves are kind to those who are so to them: And therefore one of them sent Word to *Cræsus*, who complain'd of his Unkindness, after he had fill'd his Altar with frequent Incense, that he had no reason to find fault with him for being unkind; for when he, *i. e. Cræsus*, was to be burnt by the Order of *Cyrus*, he, *i. e. the Devil*, raised a Storm of Wind and Rain, and put out the Fire; and it's probable he did so, if God gave him leave, being the Prince of the Air; and therefore in a Capacity of making Alterations and Changes in Wind and Weather.

However, his Kindness is very evident to those who do ordinarily serve him by their Vices; for to requite their faithful Service, he frights them not, molests them not, perhaps not all the Days of their Lives, but feeds them with pleasant Fancies, gives them opportunity to fulfil their wicked Desires, and to accomplish their Lusts; and sometimes, as we read of Pope *Silvester II.* helps them to considerable Preferment. It's true, these are dangerous Kindnesses, yet they are taken for such by vitious Men; and it serves to prove, that the Principle of the *Text* is observ'd by the *Devils* themselves; and then what a strange Creature must he be, who is defective in this Practice, seeing he is worse than Beasts and Devils. And the thing being so very bad, one would think none should be found, at least among *Christians*, who can be charged with this Guilt;

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Guilt; but whether there be such Persons, will appear from the Second Particular.

I. *What Persons they are who act against this natural Principle.* And here,

1. What do ye think of refractory, unnatural, and untowardly Children, who reward the tender Care of their Parents, their Love, and Tenderneſs, and Indulgence, with Contempt of their Advice and Admonitions, and running into Rioting and Drunkenneſs, into Chambering and Wantonneſs, into Strife and Envy, and taking Courses which tend to the undoing of their Souls and Bodies? Are there no ſuch Children? If there are none, what's the Reaſon of the many daily Complaints of this Nature? Whether there be any ſuch among us at this preſent, I know not, but if there were, I would ſhew them their Faces in this Glaſs, and let them ſee how ugly and deformed they look. I would call to them in the Language of St. John the Baptiſt, *O Generation of Vipers, why will not ye be warned to flee from the Wrath to come?* A *Generation of Vipers* indeed, that tear out the Bowels of thoſe who gave you Life! Do not your Parents love you? Do not they Maintain, and Feed, and Educate you in the Fear of God? Do not they entreat you to mind your everlaſting Intereſt? Do not they encourage you to Goodneſs, diſſuade you from Vice, invite you to the Houſe of God, to Prayer, and to other
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Exercises, which will give you Peace in the End? Do not they plead, and reason, and argue with you, and warn you not to undo your selves? And is not this Love, and Tenderneſs, and Affection? But if you reject their holy Counſels, deſpiſe their Exhortations, and ſcorn their warmeſt Expoſtulations, will run into Company, which is your Bane, ruſh into Deſtruction, and venture into the Chambers of Death, is not this requiting their Love with Hatred, their Kindneſs with Baſeneſs, and their Charity with the greateſt Ingratitude? And is not this ſinking below *Publicans* and *Heathens*? for *they love thoſe that love them*. Tell me not, that you love their Perſons, though you hate their Inſtructions; for what doth Love to their Perſons ſignifie, while you hate that wherein they do moſt of all expreſs their Love, and declare their Tenderneſs and Affection?

2. The ſame may be ſaid of Hearers, with reſpect to their faithful Paſtors and Teachers; we admoniſh, we entreat, we reprove, we tell our People of their Vices, and ſpare them not; we repreſent to them their Errors in their native Colours, and all that they may amend their Ways, and become Favouriteſ of Heaven: And is not this Tenderneſs, and Love, and Affection? What elſe can be the Reaſon of it? It is true, our Calling and Profeſſion obliges us to ſay ſomething, but this we might do in general Terms, without rubbing their Sores,

or

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or lancing their Wounds, or breaking their Imposthumes. It's Kindness therefore that makes us tell them the Truth, and lay open their Defects, and assure them of the Terrors of the Lord, and all that their Souls may live, and be blessed, and glorious, and enjoy the future Glory. But yet we find, that some there are who hate us for our Pains, call us Rash, and Inconsiderate, and worse Names, and bear a secret Spleen to us, because we are so plain and downright, and so free in our Censures; and is not this hating those who love you? *St. Chrysostom* had large Experience of these unkind Returns, and therefore in several of his Homilies, he warns his Auditors, and exhorts them not to suffer their faithful Teachers to be slander'd or abus'd. Some of the *Corinthians*, 1 *Cor.* ix. 11. thought much of contributing to the maintenance of their Pastors; the Apostle is surpriz'd at it: *What, saith he, if we have sown unto you spiritual Things, is it a great Matter, if we reap your carnal Things?* And he had reason to find fault with this mean Spirit of theirs, as being contrary to this natural Principle of *loving those who love us.*

3. The same may be said of all Persons who have been signally oblig'd by others, and yet can hardly afford a good Word to those from whom they have receiv'd such signal Kindness, but carried away by Faction or Interest, speak Evil of them, and revile them; would to God such Persons were as rare

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rare among us as *African Monsters* are; but even of such ungrateful Wretches, the Age we live in gives us too many Instances. *David* complained of them long ago. *Yea, mine own familiar Friend, in whom I trusted, and who did eat of my Bread, hath lift up his Heel against me,* Psal. xxi. 9. and could any thing be more base or barbarous, than for *Herod* to go about to kill *Christ*, who had purged his Country of Devils and Diseases, *Luke* xiii. 31. And was it not a most inhumane Attempt, for those very Soldiers, whose Lives *St. Paul* preserv'd from Shipwreck, to consult to kill him with the rest of the Prisoners, *Acts* xxvii. 42, 43. And it seems this wicked Generation doth last still. And what shall I say more, we cannot without Grief, behold the many bold Offences which are committed daily against this Principle of Nature, even in those Relations, the very Name of which speaks mutual and reciprocal Kindnesses, such as *Husband* and *Wife*, *Brothers* and *Sisters*, *Masters* and *Servants*, &c. who would suspect Unkindness among those Relatives, to those especially who study and seek their Good, and are more than ordinarily concern'd to express their Love and Respect to them, and in whose Mouth is the Law of Kindness; yet even in this Grass the Serpent lies, and the Snake doth hiss.

After all, the Rich and Great offend against this Law, such, I mean, as are *Morose*, and *Proud*, and *Self-conceited*, and do not

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not think a poor Neighbour, their Brother in *Christ*, worthy of a civil Salutation, a Civility not denied by *Heathens* and *Publicans* to the meanest of their Brethren; and of this Nature are those false Salutations and pretended Civilities of dissembling and hypocritical Men, such as *Joab*, and others, whose Words are softer than Butter, but War is in their Hearts; who seem indeed to love those who love them, but it is from the Teeth outward, for they hate them within.

There needs no Gospel to condemn such bold and daring Sinners, the Light of Nature will serve to do it, tho' it is confess'd, that the Gospel under which they live, and which teaches them greater and better things, will help to aggravate both their Sin and Punishment.

And this will justify our Third Enquiry.

III. *How Men come to sink so low, so much beneath Heathens and Publicans, as to act against this natural Principle.* And,

1. They have very weak, dull, and dark Apprehensions of the Worth and Nature of *Christianity*; and indeed, of any Religion; some Religion or other they must profess; and since Providence lets them stumble upon the *Christian*, they embrace it, but consider not what it imports, how Holy its Precepts are, how Rich its Promises, how Ample its Advantages, how Clear its Revelations, how Great its Excellencies, and how
justly

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justly it requires greater Stridnesses than either *Judaism* or *Heathenism*, or any other Religion in the World. This Consideration would make them dread offending against the Law of Nature, and make them asham'd to think, that they who are bound to do more than others, should not do so much as others. These Things being no Objects of their Thoughts, they have a very low Opinion of the Religion they profess, and therefore are not concern'd nor frightened if they fall below the Grandeur of it, lower than *Heathens* and *Publicans*, and consequently, *do not love those who love them.*

2. Their Lusts are stronger than their Religion. This natural Principle of loving those who love them, is agreeable enough to their Reason and Speculation; but some predominant Lust, either Avarice, or Ambition, or Pride, or Envy, or Lasciviousness, or Delight in vain Company, or something their sickly Desires crave, and which they fancy their reciprocal Love would hinder them from, some such Lust, I say, reigning and domineering within it, damps and drowns that reciprocal Love they owe to those that love them. A Man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own Lust, and enticed, saith St. James, Ch. i. 14. As natural as it is to be kind to those who are so to us; yet if a Man give way to some violent Lust or Desire, and let's that have the upper-hand, it will draw and force the Man away from the most easie, and most familiar,

liar, and most rational Duty whatsoever.

Not to mention, that if the Party who is or hath been kind, be defective in one Act, if after Nineteen Kindnesses he fail to do the Twentieth, this shall be thought, by such Persons, an Argument sufficient to justify their want of reciprocal Love and Affection: But this shews the Disingenuity of their Temper, and that an evil Spirit hath taken possession of their Hearts, and committed a Rape upon the Dictates of their Reason and Understanding. And thus Men come to act against Principles which even *Heathens* and *Publicans* do observe.

Inferences.

1. I observe here, That Religion is not intended to make Men clownish and uncivil; for our Saviour in the *Text* supposes saluting our Brethren, to be not only lawful, but a natural Duty, which God expects of Men as Men. Indeed, he would have us do more than this comes to, and extends it even to Enemies, and to Persons who have wrong'd, affronted, and abus'd us, but he doth not deny the Lawfulness of it, but establishes this lower Duty, which even *Heathens* and *Publicans* count reasonable.

And therefore that Sect which places Religion in forbearing all external Salutations, sins against a natural Duty. The Gospel

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doth not abolish, but exalt all natural Duties, and sets them in a brighter Light; and that therefore if saluting our Brethren, or Fellow-Christians be a natural Duty, it must be much more a *Christian Duty*; so that the *Spirit of the Man*, seems rather a *Spirit of Pride* and Delusion, than the *Spirit of God*, which inclines the Soul to Affability, Courteousness, and Civility, and Respect to Superiors. Nor must the Condescension of Superiors to the meanest Capacity, or their Humility, make us lay aside the Respect we owe them; for this is to give occasion that the Way of Truth is evil spoken of, and to bring an evil Report upon the good Land. It's true, in *Christ*, we are all equal, with respect to the Privileges and Advantages that come by *Christ*, they being promised or tender'd to all; but that doth not destroy the external Respect, Obedience, and Civility we owe to Persons of different Ranks and Qualities, or to Men whom Providence hath raised above the common Level in Church or State.

Ignorant, the Men of this World will call that Clownishness, when a good Man will not drink with them, nor comply with their Sensualities, but reproves them either for their Oaths, or other Sensualities. But that Clownishness, if it must be call'd so, is a Duty. Notwithstanding this, we may preserve the Respect due to their Places and Elevations in the World, as we see in *St. Paul*, who, though he did not comply

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with the Sins of *Ananias* the High-Priest, and of *Festus* the Governour, yet paid them the Respect their Stations, and the Figure they made in the World requir'd.

II. The *Text* teaches us, how we are to aggravate our Sins, in our Confessions to God. To commit Sins, which the very *Heathens* and *Publicans* condemn and abhor, must needs be very dreadful in a *Christian*, because he sins against the very Principles of Nature. In the same manner, to neglect that which *Heathens* and *Publicans* by the Light of Nature do find and affirm, and observe as necessary, must make the omission exceeding black in a *Christian*, because he is without excuse. And therefore, if any of us have been unkind, disobliging, ill-natur'd, cross, and surly, and morose to those who are kind, and loving, and tender, and charitable to us, let's not make light of the Sin, which is so much the greater, by how much it is condemn'd by *Heathens* and *Publicans*.

Christians, the Gospel obliges you to love your *Enemies*, and will not ye love your *Friends*? Not to love your *Enemies* will bring the Wrath of God upon you; how much more your not loving those who love you? The neglect of the more difficult Task will make you miserable, and will not neglect of the easier cover your Faces with Confusion? Intemperance, Drunkenness, Cheating, Defrauding, Lying, Extortion, Profaneness, &c. are condemn'd by the

very *Heathens*, and will you, (from whom greater Vertues are expected) defile your selves with such Sins as these? The brighter the Light is, the greater is the Sin; and therefore a *Christian* who lives under a higher Dispensation, if he neglects that, which the lesser was sufficient to instruct him in, sins with a Witness, for he sins in the midst of Sun-shine. In our Confessions therefore, such Sins must be particularly deplor'd, as exceeding others in Heinousness: And O! let the Greatness of the Sin fright us for ever from venturing upon the like again; and let's bless God, that there is yet Hopes of Mercy, and Vertue, and Efficacy in the Blood of *Jesus*, to wash away Sins, which bring more than ordinary Guilt upon the Soul.

III. Since it is so unnatural and irrational a thing not to love those, who love us, behold how irrational and unnatural a thing it must be not to love God, who loves us, and hath loved us into Miracles and Prodigies? Hath not he loved us? Dares any say, he hath not? If he hath not loved us, what do our Praises signifie? Why do we praise him, as it is in our *Liturgy*, for our *Creation, Preservation, and all the Blessings of this Life*? Why do we publicly and privately praise him above all things, for the *Redemption of the World by our Lord Jesus Christ*; for the *Means of Grace*, and for the *Hope of Glory*? Are not these Signs of Love? Can there be greater Characters of his Love?

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Love? Do not we own, and confess, and acknowledge, that these are certain Marks of Love?

But why, *Christian*, why art thou so unkind to that God who hath loved thee thus? He keeps thee, he watches over thee, he is thy Sun and thy Shield, thy Shade on thy right Hand, daily and hourly he showers down Blessings upon thee, and all the Evils that befall other Men, and which thou art preserved from; it's he that preserves thee from them. But why so disrespectful to that God, who incircles and crowns thee with loving Kindnesses and tender Mercies? Art not thou unkind to him, when thou sin'st against him? Art not thou disrespectful to him, when thou wilfully do'st that which he protests in his Word is abomination in his Eyes? What Iniquity do'st thou find in him, that a God so tender and so kind cannot attract or charm thy Heart into reciprocal Love? Why wilt thou suffer that Tongue of thine to vent it self in frothy and corrupt Communications, which was given thee to sing his Praises? Why wilt thou dishonour him with those Creatures which were intended for thy use and refreshment? Why wilt thou make those Members of thy Body Instruments of Unrighteousness, which were intended to be Instruments of Holiness? Why wilt thou make thy Soul a Sink and Sty of impure and noisome Lusts, which was intended to be a Temple of the

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Holy Ghost? Why wilt thou make those Mercies thou enjoyest, Weapons to fight against him, which were intended as silken Strings to lead thee to his Banqueting-House, the Banner whereof is Love?

He draws thee with Cords of Love, (was ever greater Gentleness used toward a Child?) and canst thou find in thy Heart to grieve such Bowels of Compassion? *Behold what manner of Love the Father hath shewn to us, that we should be called the Children of God;* and is this your Gratitude, to make your selves Children of Hell, and Heirs of Damnation?

There is that in the Love of God, which would be an Antidote against all Sins whatsoever, hadst thou but Courage to remember that Love, and to set it before thee in lively Characters. *Joseph* remembered God lov'd him, and he resolutely resists the Charms of his Mistress; *How can I,* saith he, *commit this Wickedness, and sin against God?* *Christian,* were the Love of God seriously remembered and thought of, thou couldst not sin. To offend him would go as much against thee, as drinking Poyson, or a Draught of Gall and Wormwood.

We talk a Thousand great Things of Love, what Power it hath to charm rational Souls: *Sirs,* God hath given you rational Souls, and you are sensible there is no Love so great, so amazing, so wonderful, as the Love of God to your Souls and Bodies,

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dies. *I beseech you therefore, Brethren, by the Mercies of God, by the Love of God, by the Charity of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you present your Souls and Bodies living Sacrifices, holy and acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable Service. Amen.*

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SERMON XXXIX.

St. Matth. Ch. V. Ver. 48.

Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father, which is in Heaven is perfect.

THAT no Man may be offended at this Command of *Perfection*, which some think utterly impossible on this side of Heaven, and others do as vainly boast of, as if they were arrived to it. Give me leave to tell you, that it's no unusual thing in Scripture, to meet with Exhortations of that Nature. It was God's Order to *Abraham*, Gen. xvii. 1. *Walk before me, and be thou perfect*; and it seems, it is the Design of the Gospel, and of the preaching of it, that we may present every one perfect in *Christ Jesus*, Coloss. i. 28. And to this purpose was the Prayer of *Euphrates* for the same *Colossians*, *That they might stand perfect and compleat in all the Will of God*, Col. iv. 12. And accordingly St. Paul entreats

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treats the *Corinthians to be perfect*, 2 Cor. xiii. 11. *And let us go on to Perfection*, is the Advice he gives to the *Hebrews*, Heb. vi. 1. And *perfect Love* is expressly made a Duty, 1 John iv. 18. and *the Lord make you perfect*, is a common *Appreciation* used by the Apostles in the Close of their Epistles; so that the Command of endeavouring after Perfection, is not among the *ἀπαξ λεγόμενα*, or the Phrases which are mention'd but once in Scripture: All the Question is, what is meant by it.

There is an absolute Perfection, which excludes all Spots, and Blemish, and Defect, and hath every thing that can be rationally wish'd or desir'd to render it an Object of the greatest Admiration; and in this Sense, *the Law of God is perfect*, Jam. I. 21. and according to this Notion God is Perfect, who is all in all: But this is not the Perfection Man is exhorted to; and though it be said in the Text, *Be ye perfect, even as your Father in Heaven is perfect*; yet the Particle *as* imports only a Similitude, no equality, shewing rather, that it is our Duty to imitate our Heavenly Father, and to come as near the Original as our Frailty will give leave, than that we are to do exactly according to the Measure of the Fulness of God.

So that Perfection, when requir'd of Men and *Christians*, is a limited Perfection. By a perfect Person, the *Holy Ghost* sometimes means one who is very excellent; so he who doth not offend.

offend in word, is said to be a perfect Man, *Jam. iii. 2. i. e.* an excellent Christian, who is arriv'd to a high Degree of Self-conquest and Perfection. Sometimes a perfect Man is one that is well establish'd in the Truth, to distinguish him from others who are weak in Faith, as *1 Cor. ii. 6.* And this is to be comparatively Perfect, *i. e.* more Perfect than others. Sometimes the Scripture stiles them Perfect, who are beginning to be so, and strenuously endeavour after Perfection, as *Phil. iii. 15.* Sometimes to perfect a Thing, is to finish it, or to carry it on till it hath all its necessary Qualifications, as *1 Thess. iii. 10.* and *Jam. i. 4.* So that the Perfection we are capable of amounts to no more than Sincerity, which is an Evangelical Perfection, and such as God, for *Christ's* sake, is willing to accept of; and we are then perfect in Goodness, when no considerable Ingredient of a Holy Life is wanting.

The Words of the Text, *Be ye therefore perfect, as your Father in Heaven is perfect,* relate either to the Duty immediately preceding, or to all the Vertues and Self-denials press'd and recommended in this Chapter.

As they relate to the Duty immediately preceding, they import an impartial and universal Charity; for the Duty *Christ* insisted upon but just before is being civil, kind, and courteous, charitable, and doing good, not only to our Friends, and Brethren,

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thren, and Relations, and to the inoffensive, but to our Foes and Enemies, and such as have wrong'd, and despitefully used us: And then the Meaning is, Be perfectly kind, and follow your Heavenly Father's Example, who is kind to Good and Bad, to Friends and Foes, both to his Children, and to Strangers. If you love your Friends only, your Charity is not perfect, but wants the better half; you then compleat it, and make it sincere and perfect, when you express it not only to those who love you, but even to those that hate you.

As the Command relates to all the Vertues in this Chapter, it imports, that we are to be sincere and conscientious in the practice of them all, of one as well as the other, as our Father in Heaven exercises all his Perfections for the Good of Mankind, and the whole Creation; and particularly for the Good of those that love him. And after all, we are to suppose, that *Christ's* Design is to teach us, not to content our selves with having begun well, but to go on to the end well; for all this appertains to the Perfection enjoin'd here.

All that hath been said, may be resolved into this Proposition, *That a Christian's Perfection consists in a chearful Imitation of the Perfections of his Father which is in Heaven.* St. Paul, therefore very sensible of this Truth, earnestly entreats the *Ephesians* to be Followers of God, as dear Children, Eph. v. 1.

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Indeed, there are some Perfections in God, which we cannot, must not imitate, such as his Omniscience, and being the Searcher of all Hearts, his Self-sufficiency, and dwelling in a Light inaccessible, and certain Knowledge of the Day and Hour of the last Judgment, and the Number of his Elect, his Immortality, Omnipotency, and being the Object of Religious Adoration. In these we are to admire him, rather than imitate him.

And yet it is as certain, that he is to be imitated in his other Perfections, such as,

1. *His Charity and Beneficence* to the Good and Bad, to Friends and Foes. It's true, the Mercies shewn to both Sorts, are of a different Nature. And the Bad have not all the Blessings which the Good enjoy. Yet both have experience of his Acts of Charity. Our Imitation of him in this Particular, is chiefly aimed at in the *Text*; and in my Explication of the preceding Verses, I have again and again pressed it upon you, with very moving and powerful Arguments, even saluting, and being kind, and doing good to those who despitefully use you, as well as to your Friends, and such as never offended you, a Vertue this, which cannot be inculcated too often; for there is nothing more universally neglected, the greater Part thinking, there lies no Obligation upon them to be civil or kind to an Enemy, a Temper very different from that of the excellent Virgin in *Taule-*

rus, who being asked, what Way she took
 to arrive to that Height of Holiness, which
 appear'd in her, answer'd, "Those who
 "were most offensive and troublesome, and
 "injurious to me, I have endeavour'd to
 "love with most ardent Affection; and those
 "who abused me most, and did me the great-
 "est Wrong, upon them I have sometimes
 "heaped the greatest Kindnesses I was ca-
 "pable of, which I should not have done, if
 "they had not dealt so disingenuously with
 "me.

St. Chrysostom, in his Homily upon these
 Words, is very smart upon those who scorn
 to be civil to their Enemies, except their
 Enemies begin the Civility, and salute
 them first. "What Folly, saith he, is it to
 "expect, that thine Enemy should salute
 "thee first? if he doth, thou get'st nothing
 "by it; if thou preventest him in these Ci-
 "vilities, thou carriest away the Crown.
 "By preventing his Salutations, thou reapest
 "Profit from his Pride, his Arrogance and
 "Haughtiness, proves thy Glory. Thou
 "blamest him, because he doth not salute
 "thee first; and art not thou to be blamed
 "as much as he for not preventing his Salu-
 "tation? If he is to be blamed, why dost
 "thou imitate him in that; for which thou
 "findest fault with him? We that are bound
 to suffer our selves to be struck on the Cheek,
 and to go farther with an Enemy than we
 are constrained; and to lose our Cloak, and
 Coat, and Garments, when we are abused,
 what

what Hopes of Mercy have we, if we will not so much as prevent an Enemy in the Point of Civility and Salutes? Thou say'st I shall be laugh'd at if I do so. Mad-man, that thou may'st not be despis'd by Men, dost thou offend thy God? That thy Fellow-Servant may not jeer thee, dost thou dishonour thy Creator and greatest Benefactor? The more thy Fellow-Creature despises thee for doing thy Duty, the greater is thy Reward; for thou suffer'st that Contempt for God's sake; and let me tell you, that it's greater and better to be despised for God's sake, than to be honour'd and caress'd by all the Princes of the World.

2. Another Perfection, which requires our Imitation, is *his Patience*. See how God bears with Sinners! See how loath he is to strike; see how unwilling he is to afflict the Children of Men. They abuse him, and he lays by his Rod; they wrong him, and he with-holds his revenging Arm. *S. James*, to engage his Auditors to Patience, sets the Examples of the Prophets before them, *Jam. v. 10*. But we have a greater Example to follow, even him that teaches his Prophets Wisdom. Is God so Patient, and shall we burn with Rage and Revenge, immediately upon an Injury that's offer'd to us? Is this to be like our Father which is in Heaven? We would not have God deal with us in this manner: Foolish Creatures! And shall we deal thus with our Brethren?

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3. In his *Veracity*. God cannot lie, Tit. i. 2. and we must not lie. *Wherefore putting away Lying, speak every Man Truth to his Neighbour, Eph. iv. 25.* It is our Duty upon several Accounts, but more particularly upon this, because our Father in Heaven, whose Children we profess our selves to be, is a God of Truth. How unlike God, is that Man, who talks deceitfully to his Neighbour, that tells him one thing, and means another? How contrary is this to the Temper of our Father which is in Heaven, whose Promises are steddy like Pillars of Brass; and Heaven and Earth shall sooner perish, than the least Tittle of his Promise shall fail. When he saith the Word, Men may as firmly depend upon it, as if it were confirm'd with Oaths. This must be our Example, and a strict Veracity must attend our Speeches. He that in his Words hath not a strict Regard to Truth, not only deviates from the Temper of his Father which is in Heaven, but is like the Devil, the Father of Lies; a Likeness, from which *Good Lord deliver us.*

4. In his *Purity*. To this purpose is the standing Command, *Be ye Holy as I am Holy, 1 Pet. i. 16.* God is a Hater of Sin, and so must we *abhor that which is Evil, Rom. xii. 9.* God is an Enemy particularly to all Uncleaness, Lasciviousness, and unlawful Mixtures, and so must we, *For this is the Will of God, even your Sanctification, that every one of you should know how to possess his Vessel*
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in Sanctification and Honour, 1 Theff. iv. 3, 4. And Purity in our Thoughts, Desires, Words, and Actions, is the surest Sign that we belong to him, who is of purer Eyes than to behold Iniquity. For I will be sanctified in all them that draw nigh unto me.

And what shall I say more, God is a Lover of good Men, dwells with the Humble and Lowly, prizes Holiness, and an active Faith, beyond all the Riches, and Honours, and Grandeur of the World; esteems a Saint, before the most potent and unsanctified Wretch; condescends to Persons of the meanest Rank, executes Judgment for the Oppressed, relieves the Fatherless and Widow, takes Care of the Stranger, pities them that are in Bonds, commiserates the Needy, comforts the Afflicted, counsels the Stubborn, reclaims the Impenitent, encourages the Pious and Serious, strengthens them that do stand, raises those that are fall'n; he heals the broken in their Heart, and binds up their Wounds: In all which Particulars, our Imitation of him becomes a necessary Duty. And this is *to be perfect, as our Father which is in Heaven is perfect.* To imitate his Perfection is our Perfection, a Duty necessary, because commanded; and some other Reasons which make it so, are these following:

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Reasons.

Reasons.

1. In this Imitation we cannot be mistaken: Here we are sure we are in the right: Were there danger of going astray, or falling into Waters, or running upon Precipices, it would be some Discouragement. God can do nothing that's Evil. The Perfections which are in him, are undoubtedly good and right. Here is no fear of a false Light, of an *Ignis fatuus*, of a false Teacher, of a *Barcacab*, of a Deceiver. God can deceive no Man; it is against his Nature and his Will. He is the Fountain of Goodness. He is Good and doth Good, and is a Guide to them that walk in Darknes. Whatever he doth must be Praise-worthy and commendable; and in following his Example, we cannot run into By-Paths, into Labyrinths, into dangerous Gulfs. He is Light, and in him is no Darknes at all; and therefore we have reason to walk in the Light, even as he is in the Light; for in following that Light, we do, and cannot but do, that which is Holy and Just, and agreeable to the Rules of Wisdom and Righteousness, and which will lead us into the Ways of Peace, and Satisfaction, and Joy, and Comfort, even to the still Waters, to the Fountain of living Waters, whereof whoever drinks, shall never thirst again.

2. Our

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2. Our Interest, our Duty, our Life, our Breath, and Being, and all the Mercies we enjoy, oblige us to love him; but how can we love him, except we imitate him? Love doth naturally incline to Imitation. The ancient *Egyptians* are said to have a mighty Veneration for their Kings, and that Love so wrought upon them, that they would imitate their Princes in their Halting, Lameness, and such other Defects and Infirmities. The *Persians* had that Love for *Cyrus*, that they would even bow their Childrens Noses, to make them *Aquiline*, or like Bills of Eagles, because that of *Cyrus* was so. So did *Alexander's* Courtiers hold their Heads on one side, because *Alexander* went so; and the Disciples of *Aristotle* would go stooping out of Love to their Master, who used that Posture. If Love hath that Power with Men, that it constrains to imitate those whom they love, even in their Blemishes, and that with Pain and Uneasiness, can we talk of loving God, while our Love works in us no Imitation of his Goodness, Righteousness, Veracity, Mercy, Clemency, &c. than which nothing is more profitable or edifying to our Souls, and in which our very Perfection consists. Perfection is that which we very earnestly desire, and endeavour after in other Things, perfect Health, perfect Strength, perfect Liberty, &c. and is Perfection in Goodness, no Motive, no Temptation?

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3. It is certain, we are to tread in our Saviour's Steps. It's this that makes us *Christians*. We have vow'd it, we have promis'd it, even to follow the Lord *Jesus*; but how can this be done, except *we imitate our Father which is in Heaven*? Christ himself did so. The Son can do nothing but what he sees the Father do; for what things soever he doth, these also doth the Son likewise, John v. 19. He loved as God loved, and was merciful as God was merciful. In a Word, he was the express Image of his Person, not only of his Nature, but of his Perfections too; and if this was our Saviour's Work, we cannot imitate that Saviour, except we endeavour to be perfect, as our Father which is in Heaven is perfect. But I shall press this no farther. There are several weighty Inferences which may be drawn from the Premises for our Instruction, and I must proceed to acquaint you with them.

Inferences.

I. From this Command of being Perfect, it doth not follow, that on this Side Heaven, we may arrive to a perfect Freedom from all Sin, great and small, which seems to have been the Doctrine of *Pelagius*, and his Disciple *Celestius*; and if we may believe *St. Austin* and *Cassian*, they proceeded to that Extravagance, as to affirm, that all this might be done by the meer Strength and Force of Nature. They do indeed alledge, the

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the Examples of *Abel*, of *Abraham*, *Isaac*, and *Jacob*, and how God rewarded them with making them his Friends, and gave them great Instances of his Love and Favour. But all that can be inferr'd from thence, is only this, that he encourag'd their Faith by gracious Recompences, as a Father doth a Child otherwise faulty enough, upon some excellent Act of Obedience, but not that they were free from all Sin; there is not a just Man upon Earth, that doth good and sinneth not, saith *Solomon*, *Eccles. vii. 20.* and the just Man falls seven times, i. e. Sins by Surprize very often, and rises up again, *Prov. xxiv. 16.* We grant very readily what *St. John* says, *1 John iii. 9.* That the regenerate cannot sin, because the Seed of God remains in them; but if we compare that Passage with other Places of Scripture, the Sense must necessarily be this, That committing such Sins as worldly and sensual Men make nothing of, is against their Temper and Inclination, as *Joseph* told his Mistress, *How can I commit this Wickedness?* They cannot sin wilfully, or with delight, or allow themselves in any known Sin, nor sin impenitently. It's true, such Men are call'd Perfect, because they have a respect to all the Commandments of God, and there is nothing remarkable in all the Compass of Vertue and Goodness, which they do not heartily endeavour after, and their Sincerity is called Perfection; but still, that's no Argument, that therefore they are not subject to acci-

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dental Slips and Failings, while they live among Men, and converse with variety of Persons, which they expiate by a renew'd and daily Repentance, so that a Man may be a perfect Man, as the Sun is a perfect Light; yet as that Luminary hath its Spots, and is subject to be clouded, so righteous Men may have lesser Faults, and be subject to Inadvertencies, and yet be Perfect still.

II. It follows from the Premises, that both the Saying in the *Text*, and all the other Oracles deliver'd in this Sermon, are Precepts, not Counsels, Duties which every *Christian* is oblig'd to perform; not meer Heroick Actions, which the Religious only, and those who have entirely dedicated themselves to God's Service are oblig'd to mind, or to exercise themselves in the Church of *Rome*, by making a Distinction betwixt *Counsels* and *Precepts*, cuts the Sinews of a *Christian* Life; and how pleasing soever this Doctrine may seem to carnal Men, in that it gives them Hopes, that they may be excused from the severer and weightier Duties of the Law; but that this Doctrine is false, particularly with respect to the Oracle of the *Text*, and the rest in this Chapter, is evident from hence, because *Christ* speaks to all his Disciples, and all that call themselves *Christians*, own themselves to be so; and therefore all must fall under the Obligation. And are not we all fond of being Children of our Father which is in Heaven; and if the Children of God are

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are obliged to these Self-denials, can any of us excuse our selves from the Duty, since there are none of us, but what are desirous to be honour'd with that Title?

I will not deny, but there are some Evangelical Counsels, which all are not obliged to perform; of this Nature is *Celibacy*, or a single Life, whereof *Christ* speaks, *Matth. xix.* But then these Counsels are so expressed, that we may know they are no peremptory Commands, to which all are obliged, as in the preceding Instance of a single Life, *Christ* says, *He that is able to receive it, let him receive it, Matth. xix. 12.* which differs very much from a commanding Stile; and besides, the Sayings in this Sermon of *Christ*, are enjoyn'd upon pain of Damnation, and those who hear them, and neglect to do them, whoever they be, great or low, Clergy-men or Lay-men, are called Fools, and miserable, and undone for ever.

III. We see here, there is no standing still in Religion, but he that will be saved, must press on toward Perfection. It is very common with some *Christians*, when they are come to such a Pitch of Devotion, there to rest and grow secure, and maintain that Formality, and think themselves sufficiently Religious. But this must be a Mistake, and it's a Sign they do not search their Hearts, nor examine their Lives, nor compare their Behaviour with the particular Rules of the Gospel; which if they did,

they would find, that there is always something to reform, to amend, to rectifie, and to set in order; something to remove, and something to plant, something to meliorate, and something to dislodge; in a Word, that some other Vertues, besides those they have already, are to be Objects of their Love and Delight.

That Person who contents himself with his being free from scandalous Sins, stops there, and looks after no greater Perfection, most certainly disobeyes the Words of the *Text*; for how doth he endeavour after Perfection, that parts with one Sin, and pleases himself with another; and with the *Pharisee*, cries, *I thank thee, O God, that I am not as other Men, unjust, adulterous, &c.* and all this while allows himself in Pride, Arrogance, Censoriousness, and Self-conceitedness. Not to go on in Religion, or not to perfect what is begun, nor not to proceed from Vertue to Vertue, is to go backward: And he that is at a stand, lies expos'd to the Devil's Temptations, *for we are not ignorant of his Devices.* He that stands still, will not be long before he goes backward, he is next door to it; for this gives the Enemy a fair Opportunity to lull him into a Slumber, from whence he seldom awakes, till God calls upon him in a terrible Accent: *Thou Fool, this Night thy Soul shall be taken from thee; and whose shall be what thou hast provided?*

IV. Let's

IV. Let's earnestly labour after Perfection, and that none may ask what Perfection is, It is no other, no less, no meaner Perfection, than what is pressed in the *Text*: *Be ye therefore perfect, as your Father which is in Heaven is perfect.*

This Perfection, to give a fuller Account of it, relates, 1. To the Kinds of Graces.
2. To the Degrees of Grace.

1. To the Kinds of Graces. Endeavour after Perfection appears in nothing so visible, as in our serious Endeavours after the several Graces which make up the Wedding-Garment spoken of in the Gospel, and the charming Ornament of *Christ's* Spouse. Not only one, but all must appear very lovely in our Eyes. If one seems amiable, and the rest are nauseated, the Heart is not right with God. We must not content our selves with being liberal to the Poor and Needy, but Meekness and Humility, and Love of Enemies, and overcoming the Evil with Good, must be as heartily espoused as the other. To this purpose is that Command of *St. Peter*, *2 Pet. i. 5. Add to your Faith, Vertue; unto Vertue, Knowledge; unto Knowledge, Temperance; unto Temperance, Patience; unto Patience, Godliness; unto Godliness, Brotherly-kindness; and unto Brotherly-kindness, Charity, &c.* There is indeed a great Stress on some particular Vertues, and particularly on Alms-giving; and there are such lofty things said of it, that the unwary Reader will be apt to think he need do no more in
order

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order to Salvation. But though God's special Favour and Esteem of such a Vertue is set down, by Way of Motive and Encouragement; yet it's certain, it's no where said, that such a Vertue alone will suffice, in order to eternal Happiness, and when the rest are enjoin'd with as great Severity as this, it must necessarily follow, that the rest are equally necessary. The *Pharisees* indeed had an Opinion, that if a Man did exercise himself in any one Command, though he neglected the rest, he would not fail of a blessed Portion in the Life to come. But this plainly contradicts the *Christian's* Rule, which is, *Ye are my Friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you, Joh. xv. 14.* and it's to be fear'd, that where the Obedience is partial, the Plant cannot be, or is not of our Heavenly Father's planting. The *Stoicks* which held, that he who had one Vertue, had all the rest, were so far in the right, that he, who upon a good Principle, out of Love to Goodness, applies himself to one Vertue, is in a Disposition to be Master of the rest, if he pursues that Principle; but to think, that all the rest will fall in the Course to him, who by frequent Acts shews, he is pleased with one, is what Experience confutes, and Reason tells us cannot be, except the same Industry be used, to attain to the rest, that was used in the pursuit of that we have made a considerable progress in.

2. This

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2. This Perfection must be seen in the Degree of those Graces we are possessed of. A lower Degree must be raised into a higher; Faith, which is like a Grain of Mustard-Seed, must be advanced into a spreading Shrub; so must Hope, so must Love, so must Charity, so must other Graces. The Acts must be improv'd into Habits, and the tender Plant must become robust, till it can bear the Injuries of Wind and Weather. The beginnings of a Vertue are Encouragements to proceed in it; he that doth not, doth not grow strong in the Lord, and consequently doth not endeavour after Perfection.

3. This Perfection reaches farther yet, even to doing of such things, as are more perfect. There are divers Actions which seem to have no great hurt in them; and yet it is certainly a more perfect Act to abstain from them. This is to be observed particularly in Eating and Drinking, in Dressing and Cloathing, in Speeches, and Discourses, and Visits, in Conversation and Company, in Sports and Recreations, &c. Such a Jest, eating of the other Dish, drinking the third Glass, playing for Company's sake, such a gaudy Dress, &c. may seem harmless; but it is greater Perfection to forbear them; so in doing Good, it is, many times, greater Perfection to do such an Act of Charity, than to forbear it. In all which Cases, a *Christian* who follows our Saviour's Rule in the *Text*, will have a special

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cial Regard to what is more perfect, and
therefore more pleasing to God.

In such Particulars as these, consists the
Christian Perfection, which here we are ex-
horted to labour after; but I can have but
little Hopes, that you will exercise your
selves toward this Perfection, except you
were very resolute to make use of the proper
Means, which are these following.

1. A mighty Ambition after Spiritual
Things; as great an Ambition to be truly
Good and Holy, as others have to be Rich
and Great in the World.

2. A vigorous Consideration of the future
Degrees of Glory, according to the progress
you make here. He that meditates much
of these Degrees, will find in himself a vehe-
ment Desire after such Degrees of Sanctity,
as the most perfect Persons have attain'd
to.

3. A fervent Love of the Lord *Jesus*, such
a Love as we find in *St. Paul*, in *St. John*,
in *Mary*, the Sister of *Martha*, &c. a Love
which must rise from the strong Impresses
made upon the Soul by the Sufferings of
Christ, and his Love in descending from
Heaven, and dying for us.

4. A lively Representation of what God
hath done for us, both in Spirituall and
Temporals; for this will mightily inflame
the Soul, and put her upon doing any thing
which he delights in.

5. An

5. An attentive Consideration of the Title in the *Text*, where God is called, Our Father which is in Heaven, an Epithet often repeated, and therefore often to be thought of. If we are his Children, what should we do but imitate him, that being the Nature and Duty of Children, that do not bear that Name in vain. He is in Heaven, this speaks his Greatness: We see how Great Men prevail with us, to do things even contrary to our Inclination: And shall not he, who is the greatest of all, influence our Resolution to be Perfect, as he himself is Perfect? Moreover, he is in Heaven, and from thence looks down upon us. It is his Condescension that he doth so, and that Condescension ought to be a Motive to this Perfection. He looks down upon us, to see how we improve our Talents; if we do not, he notes our Guilt in his Book, where it will stand as a Witness against us. And he is said to be in Heaven, to let us see the Place which we are to be receiv'd into, if we be Perfect, and truly endeavour after it: Thither he intends to draw us, to the same Kingdom where himself Reigns, and where *Christ*, our Head, Reigns. And is this no Argument to stir us up to this Perfection? I do not mention Prayer, as a Means, because we still suppose, that whatever Helps we offer, all are insignificant without fervent Prayer. And thus we have chalk'd out the Way to *Christian* Perfection; a Perfection, to speak properly

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perly, begun on this Side the Grave, and which shall be perfected in Heaven. And when that which is truly Perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away. I conclude with St. Peter's ardent Wish, *1 Per. v. 10.* But the God of all Grace, who hath called us to his eternal Glory in Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffer'd a while, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you. To him be Glory and Dominion for ever. Amen.

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